



Pax et bonum.

THE FRANCISCAN

Vol. XVIII

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HILFIELD FRIARY

Some Future Events for Your Diary

SUMMER FESTIVAL

SATURDAY, 3 JULY

2.30 p.m. — 6.30 p.m.

- 3.00 (a) Talk by Brother Jonathan (Guardian of Hilfield)
- (b) First Slide Show—The Life and Work of the Community
- (c) Children's Ramble
- 3.45 Second Slide Show
- 4.15 Tea
- 5.30 Evensong

QUIET DAYS

For Priests and Layworkers

10.00 a.m. — 4.00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, 9 JUNE

Please bring sandwiches—The Friary will provide Tea and Coffee

There will be two Addresses and opportunities for silence and reading and those who wish to make their confession

For Lay-People

SATURDAY, 17 JULY

The Programme as above

SCHOOLS OF PRAYER

- (a) Wednesday Mornings at 10.00 a.m.
followed by the Eucharist and Sandwich Lunch
29 September
6, 13, 20, 27 October
- (b) Tuesday Evenings at 8.00 p.m.
followed by Coffee and Compline
26 October
9, 16, 23, 30 November
7 December

For full details, please get in touch with Brother Jonathan

Brother Neville in old age (below) and Cable Street (above) as he knew it. Number 84 is the second door from the right : an open bible can be seen in the window.

(See article 'Mister Faddernebble' in this number)



Christian Belief



THE stability of the Church is measured by its fidelity to its Founder and its faith. Its vitality is measured by its capacity to adapt to new conditions and to make its message meaningful to new generations. Today we see emerging a new order based on love and the guidance of the Spirit rather than on obedience to laws. Writers and thinkers pinpoint a new sense of Christian responsibility which is less dependent on credal formularies, more on having sensitivity to the needs of others, respect for the values at stake, and creative imagination in seeking solutions to the problems involved. Liturgical renewal shows a deep concern for more effective signs, more human response, more attention to community, greater openness to the activity of the Spirit. There is a growing awareness of the new problems presented by the social implications of technology and by the miseries of the Third World. On the other hand there is, quite simply, a growing desire to pray.

The current debate on Christian belief must be seen against this background of change. It should be regarded not as a threat to stability, but as a mark of vitality. The effort to think through afresh the fundamentals of the faith, when conducted with integrity, will lead to the strengthening of the faith, and make it better fitted for the needs of a new world.

THE FRANCISCAN

In the midst of rapidly rising prices THE FRANCISCAN can fairly claim to have remained steady. The price was held for four years from 1970 to 1974. The present rate was introduced in December, 1974. Now the position has to be reviewed once more. In order to avoid raising the subscription rate, it has been decided to reduce the number of issues to three per annum, beginning in January, 1977. The subscription rate for three issues will be £1.00, including postage. Single copies will cost 35p, or 44p post free. THE FRANCISCAN will be issued during the first fortnight in January, May and September annually.

We apologise to readers for what is bound to be an unwelcome decision, but hope that we may continue to have your support and goodwill.

The Minister General's Letter

My dear friends,

Recently I have been visiting our brothers in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. It has been an interesting learning experience for me to see at first hand these two countries, taking their first steps in governing themselves as independent nations. The Solomon Islands is now self-governing and approaching full independence within a year. Papua New Guinea is now an autonomous nation within the Commonwealth.

The first thing I noticed in both countries was a marked lack of enthusiasm for the so-called freedom of independence. In the Solomon Islands Self-Government Day was the occasion of a substantial demonstration against it which ended in a good deal of violence. Even among a number of politicians there was much apprehension about the approaching independence. In Papua New Guinea, while numbers of students and young people have greeted independence with enthusiasm and see it as a great opportunity for themselves, much larger numbers see it in terms of trouble, division and internal strife and being forsaken by the Australian people.

In Papua New Guinea I found a good deal of misunderstanding as to what independence meant. Among many youngsters there was the feeling that now they could do what they liked and there were no more restraints of law, the land was all theirs and there was no need to regard the rights of property. An example of this was when a group of young men from our local village near Popondetta were stopped from taking coconuts from trees on the Dennis Taylor Farm by one of the farm workers who was promptly stoned for his interference—fortunately he was not much hurt.

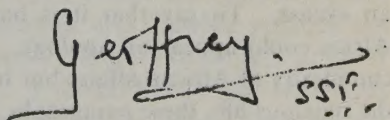
There has been a fairly large exodus of expatriates, and this includes some Chinese traders as well as whites. This it would seem is a normal happening in all countries achieving independence. It is a period of fairly drastic change, economic as well as political, which means that expatriates no longer have the secure and privileged positions they enjoyed before. But certainly in Papua New Guinea, and I believe in the Solomon Islands as well, it is not the desire of the local people that all expatriates go, though they would be glad to see the back of some of them. The governments of both these countries would be the first

to admit that at present they need a number of expatriates to help them in many fields of work because they have too few people who are trained and have the required experience. In this connection I would like to draw your attention to the Holy Name School at Dogura which was founded by the Community of the Holy Name as a Secondary School for girls. The Sisters have built up a first rate school but now feel they must hand over to the Diocese, and are in fact leaving Papua New Guinea altogether. It is so important that this fine School continue on the sound Christian lines established by the Sisters, and a new headmistress is urgently required to maintain this tradition. There appears to be no local person available at present.

It is interesting that it was the New Guinea people themselves who recently asked for a white Bishop to replace Bishop Bevan Meredith when the only alternative at the present time was a Papuan who for tribal reasons was not acceptable. Also the people of Papua New Guinea have enjoyed the good things as well as the not so good things of Western civilisation, and whites are still needed if the country is to maintain its present standard of living and to develop economically.

I am speaking more of Papua New Guinea than the Solomon Islands because P.N.G. is already a fully independent country, and one is profoundly thankful that it has produced a young and courageous leader of the calibre of Michael Somare as its first Prime Minister. There are many problems facing him and his government but they have the courage and the will to build the nation and inspire the people. Our brothers are proud to be part of these two nations in these crucial days. They look forward to playing their full part in the days ahead and are very thankful that the local people see them as their true brothers and want them to stay. We all pray for these two countries and assure our brothers there, especially our indigenous brothers, of our continued loving support and how glad and proud we are to be there.

With affectionate greetings to you all,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Geoffrey', followed by a horizontal line and the initials 'SSF'.

Minister General.

Quarterly Chronicle

Brother Michael writes :

EUROPEAN PROVINCE With this edition of *THE FRANCISCAN* a familiar friary address disappears from the front cover—Fiwila.

Just over fifty years ago Canon Hewitt, who is still active as Chaplain of S. Francis Hospital, Katete, set out from Broken Hill (now known as Kabwe) and trekked east with a train of bearers. He had been given permission to set up a mission around the sparsely-scattered villages living off the poor soil and inhospitable bush. After several days he entered a wide valley of great beauty, and it was there, close to a natural spring on the hillside that he set up his camp. Not long afterwards he was joined by a man suffering from leprosy.

With friendship and loving care he built up a flourishing mission station, a school, hospital, leprosarium, a large village with two 'streets' running through it, and in the centre a low lying, open, spacious church—the true centre.

Since then many men and women, priests and laymen, nurses and teachers have worked there. Among them Stephen S.D.C. who died in the same year as Stephen S.S.F. joined Francis and Randall to continue the work. Tertiaries, and our own Compton Durville Sisters have also had a share in the life. The expertise of Stephen, Aidan, Noël and others transformed native huts into brick-built hospitals equipped with lighting, X-ray plant, and an airstrip for visiting doctors, together with workshops for the maintenance of vehicles that remained the principal 'life line' for every possible need with far off Kabwe.

Time, however, is changing the face of Africa with startling rapidity, and five years ago we knew that we must alert the local authorities and the Bishop of our intention to leave—for the sake of Africa. A very hard decision for us to make, and them to accept. Last year the handing over began—and now the time is here. To try and explain why this is not only necessary, but right, could look like the search for an excuse. To say that it is happening elsewhere—everywhere—in Africa could appear an apology. As the answer lies not only in the complexity of African affairs but in the changing views of mission and the religious life, these paragraphs are far too brief to do justice to the case. Having been there myself several times, seen something of the

life, and promoted the departure, I know also the pain it will be to many, many people. Others will carry on where we leave off and we pray that though the life of Fiwila may change, its value to the widespread community will continue.

For us there is the need to express something of our very humble gratitude for the lessons we have learnt, the love and trust we have received. Certainly something of positive and creative purpose remains in the life of the Society. The insight and knowledge of Africa which Desmond gained at Fiwila was translated by him into the flourishing Friary in Tanzania and, in fact, the two most recent recruits to the multi-national noviciate in Dar es Salaam are from Zambia. The understanding of Peter and Francis, our first 'pioneers' in Africa is now finding its fulfilment under the leadership of Basil (himself an African citizen from Rhodesia) in the whole enterprise at Mtoni Shamba, where our African brothers are beginning to work out and declare within the Church a valid Franciscan witness.

Writing this in April I am supremely aware that before it is published in June the next phase of the protracted agony of Central Africa may well be enacted. I am very conscious that as well as Basil, who is a white Rhodesian, we have five other brothers in England all with family ties in Rhodesia or South Africa. So it is impossible for us to escape this feeling of responsibility in affection, prayer, and sympathetic association with them as the whole balance of power slowly and painfully—but very surely—changes hands. It would be unchristian for us to shirk our political and social commitments, whether we were involved (as we are) or not. It would be equally irresponsible to make hasty political or social judgements from the safe distance of Britain, or without regard for the exceedingly complex range of human factors involved.

The greatest failure of all, however, would be a failure in loving, prayerful and painful identification with all the men and women, black and white who must pass through this agony for the liberation in truth and justice of the people of Africa. As Chinese and Russian weapons pour in, as freedom fighters are trained by Russian and Chinese experts, as the one major link between Tanzania and Zambia remains the railway, built by Chinese skill (and running almost exactly as it happens between Mtoni Shamba and Fiwila). I should like to feel our friends are saying *not* that 'They just got *out* in time'—but—'They just got *in* in time'.

Certainly if our praying means anything at all, our intercession should be for Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, both Christian leaders, and their peoples, as well as all who are caught in the conflict of Rhodesia, that the compassion of Christ our Saviour may be revealed. Our brothers and sisters in the Third Order may be very few, but they *are there*, and to them belongs the privilege of leading us in the prayer of our father Francis ' Praised be my Lord by those who pardon one another for His love's sake, for thou O most mighty shalt give them a crown '. A very small voice in the clamour and conflict of Africa voices, but a voice that should be heard and echoed by all followers of Francis throughout the world.

Trevor Huddleston when he was Bishop of Masasi in Tanzania, the diocese from which several of our brothers have come, and a security area close to the borders of Mozambique had, like many others who know Africa intimately and love its people dearly, to make the decision to leave. It was he who wrote the simple prayer now more widely known which might express our longing at this time.

God bless Africa
Guide her rulers
Guard her children
And give her Peace—

Because the common humanity declared in Christ means so much to us, Africa is ours, and her people are ours, in the power of God and the prayers of His people for the bringing of peace and unity among them all.

Ministers

The re-election of Brother Geoffrey as Minister General was confirmed by the Bishop Protector on Easter Day. Brother Geoffrey will serve for a further six years. Brother Luke has also been re-elected Provincial Minister of the American Province for a further four years. Brother Anselm has been appointed Assistant Minister in the European Province.

Other Appointments and Movements

To Africa with Love : Brother Wulfram, whose infectious African smile appears in the group of three Tanzanian brothers in the March edition of THE FRANCISCAN has been made Assistant Guardian at Mtoni Friary. Brother Amos went from England to join the Mtoni family in May and has already written enthusiastically about the joy of eating home-grown pineapples ! Amos spent the first twelve years of his life in Dar es Salaam, so he is in a real sense going home.

Zambia : The withdrawal of our brothers and sisters from Fiwila takes effect from 30 June. Brother Stephen Lambert is returning to England for his leave and will be coming back to Zambia in the autumn, where he will be an Assistant Chaplain at Saint Francis Hospital, Katete. Brother Tristram and Brother Simeon are returning to the U.K. after a brief stay in the Holy Land. Brother Aidan remains at S. Patrick's Church, Chifubu, on the Zambian Copperbelt town of Ndola until November when it is planned for him to move to Dar es Salaam.

Hilfield : Brother Giles has returned from Sweden and has now ably taken up the Hilfield gardens. Many new plants keep appearing in surprise spots to the delight of all who enjoy the setting of the Friary. Only one thing threatens as the summer progresses—the severe shortage of water from the reservoir, where the level has dropped from the usual seven feet to under two. Do understand if you think Sister Flower looks unwashed—or the brothers for that matter !

London : Brother Victor who, after leaving Heathfield had a spell at Glasshampton for the obvious cause of building up the 'inner man', is now at the Plaistow Friary. He has been made Assistant Guardian. Brother Michael is the elected Guardian of the Friary but it is necessary to have a more resident brother in charge of the running of the House. Brother Frederick has been ably doing this work until now. With the arrival of Brother Victor, comes the supportive presence of Brother Victor John who has been at Alnmouth, though was called to his home at the time of a family bereavement. We offer our sympathy to Victor John and his family. It is good to have him back, and especially at Plaistow though there is bound to be some confusion of names. Brother Peter from Hilfield completes the new team.

Brother Benjamin has joined David Columba and Ian at Saint Anne's House. It is a deliberate policy that this work is not being much spoken about. But they do all ask for prayerful support. The brothers have been working in Soho after receiving the Bishop of London's licence from the beginning of the year.

Birmingham : Brother Owen, still with a good deal of discomfort, has joined the Birmingham brothers in Gillott Road. The house has certainly been a little too small for the work that Brother Arnold and company undertake and a move is imminent. The projected move is the result of very generous support from local friends. Sister Mary Catherine is now in charge of Wellclose House on the other side of town.

Professions and Clothings

On 5 March, Brother Harry made his Life Profession at the Lady Chapel of Liverpool Cathedral. With a record gathering present, it was a great joy that on behalf of our Protector, Bishop David Sheppard received Harry's vows. At the same service, Brothers Liam and Marcus made their first Profession. The occasion brought together many friends from the North West of England and after a superb *agape* lunch, Brother Michael addressed the gathering in the afternoon.

Brother Edgar made his Life Profession before the Bishop Protector at the Friary, Hilfield on 24 March. Edgar is at Glasshampton, where he acts as Guestmaster.

Brother Rufus and Brother Amos made their First Profession at the Hilfield Friary on 16 February, and Brother Terrence on 20 April at Canterbury—not the

Cathedral this time, but at the church of Saint Nicholas Hospital, next to the Friary. The afternoon ceremonies following the service at Harbledown including the visit of the Archbishop to the Hospital, when he spoke some generous words of welcome to the Society. On the theme of his Call to the Nation, Doctor Coggan reversed in our case the order for the tools that were needed to earth his message. The Brothers began with *prayer*, used their *swords* and then took hold of a *trowel*. After the blessing of the Friary, the Archbishop had tea with those living in the almshouses.

On 19 March, Brother Richard Alan (Richard Pope) was clothed as a Novice at Hilfield and went almost immediately to the school at Hooke for the spring term. Brother Jeremy (Brian Anderson) was clothed at Alnmouth on 31 March.

Focus on Canterbury

Brother Andrew Philip writes : Warsaw, Munich, Budapest, Valencia, Bucharest—no, it's not another grand tour by a friar ! They are the names on the juggernaut lorries that thunder day and night past the house at Harbledown on the edge of Canterbury. Fortunately we have only to endure the noise and dirt for a few more months before the by-pass opens. This road has been in continual use for at least two thousand years as a main route between London and the Continent. From our windows we can see Bigbury camp across the hop fields and apple orchards, where in 54 B.C. Julius Caesar defeated the locals in a major battle. Just below us is the meeting-point of the two Pilgrims' Ways—the ancient track from Winchester, and Chaucer's route from London—Watling Street. The latter was the one that the first friars took to London as they set off from their friary in Canterbury in 1224 ; the same month that Francis received the stigmata.

And now, in 1976, four Franciscan brothers and one sister live in what was a near-derelict building owned by the Trustees of Saint Nicholas Hospital, founded in 1085 by Archbishop Lanfranc as a leper hospital. It was re-founded in the thirteenth century to serve the poor and the aged. Today it houses some twenty elderly people who have very kindly welcomed us and helped us in different ways. S.S.F. was invited to start a friary in the uninhabited old gatehouse which was then extensively restored. We all finally moved in last October—pilgrims from our various houses, to become a new Franciscan family—to do what ? To be what ?

Well : for example, the posters say, ' Augustine founded it, Becket died for it, Cromwell shot at it, Hitler bombed it and now time is destroying it '. But ' fear not ', we say, for now Brother Terrence cleans it ! (The cathedral, that is). He is there cleaning five mornings a week from 7 a.m. to 12 noon. Here is a desire to commit and identify with humble work outside the friary, learning the value of a weekly wage, and helping to keep our spirituality ' earthed '. Brother Andrew Philip likewise climbs on his bike in the early morning, to go and clean for Pearl Assurance in the city before office hours.

To be ' earthed ' spiritually implies that we wish to develop stable roots in order that our branches can grow. In other words, our little community here in Harbledown must needs be grounded in prayer—whether it be in the ancient Church of S. Nicholas next door, or in our own basement chapel of S. Mary of the Angels, or in our own rooms, or in cathedral or office—in order that our reaching out can have ' soul '.

It is therefore a great joy for us to see the steady and growing stream of students, guests, religious (of all types) and visitors who join us in our worship here. We also go out, separately or as a group, to pray with Baptists, members of the United Reformed Church, Methodists, Roman Catholics, charismatics of many denominations and with our R.C. Franciscan brothers from their Study Centre in Canterbury. We pray, too, at the cathedral and at our parish church across the road, where Cyril Munt the Rector (and a Trustee of S. Nicholas Hospital) and his wife Dorothy and parishioners have made us extremely welcome. In such ways we try to make prayer the basis of our activities.

Another way for our roots to develop is in the stability and homeliness of our common life. This will become increasingly important as our home outreach develops with more people wishing to visit or stay with us during the summer months. Brother Matthew and Sister Frideswide are both particularly invaluable in keeping the flag flying, while others come and go. Our contacts with schools, colleges and the university have steadily grown, with visits both official and unofficial, participation in workshops, vigils, prayer groups, discussions, etc.—but we are continually learning that we musn't do too much at the expense of our community life.

Brother Matthew makes and sells his baskets, trays, etc., at home, and this he balances with occasional visits to schools and parishes, preaching, talking and meeting people ; he is also a master wielder of the dustpan and brush ! Sister Frideswide keeps us on our toes with her economy drives but then spoils us with her cooking.

We encourage people to come to us to share in Christian community, and to use the good facilities and space of the house (the oldest part being early fifteenth century and the newest late seventeenth century). We have had a steady flow of groups for quiet days, conferences, meetings, bible studies, working weekends for school students and other events. Brother Colin Wilfred is adept at organising this side of our life. He is also able to build up his pastoral ministry among Companions and Tertiaries, as well as in the diocese itself.

Not that we move exclusively in church circles alone. The house itself has sheltered a variety of people, including a boy damaged by drugs, a young couple thrown out on to the street with their baby, another young man due to appear at court for stealing who was dossing in the slums of Canterbury. And Brothers Andrew Philip and Terrence have helped start a youth club at the local Friends Meeting House for emotionally deprived children, who spend more time out of school than in.

And now, summer is upon us. The vegetables need planting and tending, the garden needs tidying up with flowers put in, the house needs its final decorating—and no doubt our friends the vergers at the cathedral will want to send down tired pilgrims to camp in the field here ! And still the continual work of cleaning, cooking, washing, mending, paying of bills has all to be continued as in any other household ; while at all times of the day we can expect a bang on the kitchen door or a ring at the front door bell from callers. So if you want a quiet life, please don't come to S. Nicholas Friary, Harbledown !

Nevertheless, here we are, a small group of Christians, recently put here by the Lord and S.S.F. ; all very different, trying to love the Lord and each other at the

same time, serving the needs of others and allowing our own needs to be known and served, and the Lord knows how often we fail. But we know that God acts because of and through our weaknesses, not despite them ; and so we have hope—hope for ourselves, hope for each other, hope for Canterbury, hope for the world, hope IN God.

By the time you read this, Brother Terrence will have been professed here in the church of S. Nicholas, and the Archbishop of Canterbury will have blessed our house. May God bless all of us, who seek to discover, profess and share the Gospel of Jesus.

Plaistow Provides Potential

The aspirants' weekend in early April was a most happy event with nine of our aspirants meeting together with Brothers Michael, Derek and Damian and other resident brothers of the house. To accommodate everyone, the ' residents ' had to be farmed out among willing neighbours to make room ! Since that time Graham Weir and Terry Beavington have arrived at Hilfield as postulants and are joined by Kevin Terry, whose home is in Cape Town in South Africa.

Pythons and Mud

Another saga from Dar es Salaam, penned this time by Brother Basil : The long rains have come in earnest. Our road has almost disintegrated. The grass grows about a foot a day. And it's very hot.

The brothers in desperation last week decided to clear the road to Mtoni near the rice bog. Nothing could pass. It had been raining solidly for a week. What chaos ! What fun as we marched down there with spades, hoes and rakes. The mud lay thick, red and smelly. But the ingredients for a happy afternoon were all there.

William was on form with his brilliant imitations of brothers who have lived with us in the past and all the bishops he has ever known. James, John and Leslie sang at the tops of their voices. Tshiamala helped little old ladies through the mud, while Boaz, recently arrived from Zambia, threw mud over everyone in delight. We reckoned that afternoon's work shifted about fifteen tons of mud, and eight o'clock found us all asleep in our beds.

James says he will never lock up the hens in the dark again. He had forgotten on this particular night, and while locking up the inner door felt something soft and cold brush against his neck. Up went his torch to show him the long, long coils of a very long snake. Brothers were soon roused from their rooms and prepared for the hunt. But without much enthusiasm, since our snakes don't usually reach more than seven feet.

However, once we got there it was hard to tell where this snake began and where it ended. But the hunt was on. The python (non-poisonous) slid off the roof and made off at speed for the long grass. Most brothers ran the wrong way, much to the Guardian's annoyance. He grabbed the python by the tail and swung it back on to the road.

Others began dealing it heavy blows with polythene hoses, but to no avail. William ran off for a more substantial weapon. A ten-foot, two-inch metal bar was soon

swinging wildly. Kenneth Yona danced from foot to foot in sheer glee ! The snake nearly grabbed Basil by the ankle with great hissings. John finally got him (the snake) on the head. William pinned it too the ground with a six-inch nail because, as he said, ' Its mate will come later and take it away '. Enough for that night. We would measure it the next day.

Well, it measured twelve feet exactly when stretched out. Obviously it hadn't eaten for a long time, and it was full of eggs. We estimate two thousand. The locals swarmed in to see the skinning—but from a distance !

They now send for us to deal with their snakes. The local storekeeper recently stopped the car in great excitement. ' A very big *chatu* (python)—at least twenty feet—had just eaten his dog not two miles from here (that meant at least five miles) and was asleep in the sun (and would be for the next six months)—and would we come and capture it. We had to point out that he had got it all wrong. We only kill the snakes, we don't keep them as pets !

News from North Wales

From Llanrhos Brother Nathanael writes : I am sat in the library. The sun streams through the window. It is April and spring is here. I can see the various colours which the early spring flowers display. For nature the time of resurrection is already here. The long winter's sleep is over and new life bursts forth ; a striving to reveal the Creator's glory. ' Alleluia ! The Lord is Risen '. But by the time this report goes to press, we shall have passed the third anniversary of our arrival here on 16 May, 1973, and the first Franciscan festival to be held in North Wales will be behind us.

The spring brought many visitors. There were students from the University of Wales, Bangor, where Sister Gwenfryd is continuing her valuable contribution. There have also been men in need of bodily and spiritual help. At one particular period there were four people staying in the house (we have five guest rooms) all from different backgrounds, yet all with one common denominator, the need of loving care and help. Providence, it seemed, also provided us with four Welsh-speaking natives of the north, enabling us to hold services in Welsh.

Our family life continues to grow and deepen in the awareness of our need of each other as members of a greater family, the Body of Christ. Since Advent last year we have introduced into our structure a quarterly Quiet Day. The first was conducted by our friend the Rector of Llandudno, Elwyn Roberts. The second (in Lent) was by the Welsh Methodist Minister for Conway. We look forward to the third, which we hope will be conducted by one of the Capuchin friars from Pantasaph.

We had the pleasure of entertaining the Vicar of Llanrhos and his wife to lunch before Easter. They left the parish for new pastures during Easter week. Our new Vicar is to be inducted on 3 June. While it is a case of a new face the name however is the same : Jones . . . Our new man is an old friend of the community, and is known by some of our elder brethren, especially Stephen, who visited him during his last spell of leave from Africa. Clwyd Jones is much endeared to the Franciscans, so we are assured of warm relationships parish-wise.

Pastoral work continues : Sister Gabriel links up with the parish prayer group, Raphael has contacts at Deanery Chapter and indeed with the clergy of other denominations, being our representative on the Llandudno Council of Churches.

We are thrilled to learn that Brother Silyn has been asked by the Sisters of the Community of S. John the Evangelist to be their Warden. His frequent visits to S. Davids to conduct retreats and their own community retreat has evidently strengthened ties between our two houses.

Two new bishops of the Province are worth a mention. John Poole-Hughes became Bishop of Llandaff in February. He is a former Bishop of South-West Tanganyika, and was in at the beginning of our new house at Mtoni Shamba in Dar es Salaam where he knew the brethren very well. The Bishop-elect of Swansea and Brecon, Benjamin Vaughan, was (before returning to Wales) Bishop of Belize and was Brother Desmond's diocesan.

We pray that God will continue to bless our ministry in Wales, that we may truly become instruments of His peace. Or, as they say Yn Nghymaeg : '*Arglwydd, gwna ni'n gyfryngau dy hedd*'. 'Lord, make us instruments of thy peace'.

100 Years Old !

From Alnmouth, Brother Derek writes : No, it's not the friary that's one hundred years old, nor even a friar. We only came to Alnmouth in 1961 and our oldest brother has a long way to go to reach one hundred ! But this year is the centenary of the parish church of S. John the Baptist in Alnmouth, and the celebrations are focused round the feast of the birth of S. John the Baptist on 24 June. The previous weekend is the highlight—Sunday, 20 June.

There is going to be a pilgrimage commemorating the Synod of Twyford in 684 A.D. Twyford ? Well, that's believed to be Alnmouth. At this synod, attended by Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury and King Egfrid, S. Cuthbert was elected Bishop of Hexham. He took a lot of persuading to leave the Farne Islands, and eventually the King went and persuaded him—but then Cuthbert had it changed to being Bishop of Lindisfarne, and the resident bishop was moved to Hexham which was vacant. So Cuthbert could remain on his beloved Farnes, and was eventually consecrated the following Easter.

There is an old ruin of a church in Alnmouth, originally built in 1147, with the unusual dedication of S. Waleric. It is now south of the village on the other side of the River Aln, because the river changed its course in a great storm in 1806. From the ruin at Church Hill a party will process down to the river and cross in a boat—including Brother Michael and Brother Derek. The water is so shallow that it has to be done at high tide, which is early on the Sunday morning ! All will then process from the place where the boat lands to the grounds of the parish church, where an open-air eucharist will be celebrated and Brother Michael will preach. Brother Jonathan from Hilfield Friary will also be there.

This little bit of news gives a chance to say how happy the Alnmouth brothers are at the friendship with the local vicar, Malcolm Fenwick, and his wife Ann and their boys. Malcolm celebrates the Monday eucharist at the friary most weeks, and the Brothers attend his Evensong on the last Sunday in the month and occasion-

ally the Parish Communion also. The Guardian is on the P.C.C., and many brothers have friends in the congregation and in the village. May this continue and grow !

Above the Border

Brother Bruce writes : It was with great pleasure and joy that we welcome Brother Peter Joseph into our family—already he has made a number of friends in the area. Many people are finding their way to the Edinburgh Friary. We were very pleased to welcome our new bishop, who came to lunch and spent a couple of hours with us afterwards ; we told him about our work and witness on the estate. Before he left we all went to the chapel and prayed together.

I was asked to conduct the university retreat, which brought me into contact with a number of students. Since the retreat quite a few of them have been to the friary for the evening or for a meal.

The brothers have also all been to a football match—but not to watch the game—instead to collect money for S. Columba's Hospice, which is being set up in Edinburgh for those with incurable illnesses. Ann Weatherill, a member of the Third Order, is working very hard to open the hospice.

Brother William Henry is greatly appreciated at the Play Group which he helps to run. He is the assistant leader of the group, the only male play group leader in Edinburgh—if not in Scotland.

Former Residents of Gillott Road

Extracts from a Letter by Brother Arnold to a Friend : T.N. is working things out step by step, and looks a very happy family man. T.D. looked in to tell me about his flat at Rednal. He and Barbara keep their second anniversary this summer. I have to be careful to remember these anniversaries. It's very important.

Alas, P. has gone down for five years. Unfortunately, notice of the case did not reach me till after it was over. The boys do expect me to be at hand. I'll have to see him in the Green.

All the residents are at work, so the house is quiet during the day. In fact it's a much quieter house than a year or so back.

I meet up with old acquaintances when walking along the Dudley Road. It's a bit embarrassing when told to 'jump in'. At court yesterday a man was fined £40 for travelling in a car knowing it to be stolen. There are times when it isn't altogether prudent to ask after ownership ! Ignorance can be bliss, if an uneasy bliss.

Be Praised My Lord By Sister Weed

Musing on the Work of the Brothers in Belfast, Brother Kevin writes : When we first came to Belfast, the only thing of beauty we could see in our area was a little weed growing on our back-yard wall. It was struggling for life against almost impossible odds and in the end even managed to produce a lovely yellow flower. Strange how, when we have no flowers, even a small weed reminds us of beauty and colour.

Three years have now passed since we first arrived here and now we have a lovely little garden which was built by Edmund—it is so good to see all this greenery and colour, and of course we now grow our own weeds too !

Indoors, Norman grows lots of pot plants—they are all over the place, but somehow we don't mind because they help bring a little summer indoors during the long winter months. Our plants are slips Norman has collected from friends all over Belfast. Sometimes they grow immediately, other times they look frail and uncertain.

This has often reminded me of our situation outside. Northern Ireland is a place of marked contrasts—the bigots, the cruel, the mean and spiteful, the killers and wreckers—such sad individuals who place little value on life and seem to carry on an endless campaign of hate. Then there are the warm, generous, big-hearted people who carry on despite almost hopeless odds. There we surely see the art of perseverance at its best. In this land of conflict we witness the battle for people's hearts and minds. Face to face are good and evil, hate and love, hope and hopelessness. For the Christian there is little doubt which will win in the end. The cost is high, but love will conquer and triumph.

Do please join us in praying often for Northern Ireland, for the knowledge that we are lovingly supported by the concern and love of fellow-Christians elsewhere is such an important lifeline. So we continue our life and ministry here—growing from such frail and uncertain beginnings, just like the weed on our wall. Today, three years later we are becoming very much a garden, small but producing all kinds of surprises as each season comes along. Thanks be to God for his great and many blessings.

Keeping You Posted

Guests have begun to appear again at Glasshampton. In April we were pleased to welcome the clergy of the Stourport Rural Deanery for their annual quiet day, which on this occasion was conducted by the Bishop of Worcester. The spring flowers made the gardens delightful, thanks to the unfailing efforts of Brother Arthur who has tended them this year and last, in between attention to numerous other matters.

Our postman, Wilfred, who has been coming regularly for years and drinking coffee in return for toiling up our long drive on a bicycle in all weathers, retired in February. We welcome his successor, Wally, who is similarly entertained, though he arrives on *four* wheels instead of two !

The field next to us having recently been bought by the farmer, Mr. Ballard, who has rented it for some years, we had the opportunity of acquiring the vegetable plot which we have previously used by courtesy of both the farmer and the landlord. It is now being surrounded by a rabbit-proof fence, with advice and some assistance from a friendly neighbour.

Tower in Danger

The Saxon Tower of S. Bene't's has recently been repaired following some very serious deterioration. This work was given good publicity in a news item in *The*

Times and on the 'Sunday' programme on Radio Four. It was also mentioned in the local papers in Cambridge. As a result, many generous donations have been received from a large number of friends, and S. Bene't's P.C.C. is very grateful. About £1,500 has been received altogether at the time of going to press.

About the Quakers

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Cambridge included lunchtime intercession services at S. Bene't's, as has been customary for several years. This year, Brother Michael gave a brief preliminary address each day, and he highlighted some of the insights we may find by studying the ways of the Society of Friends. These services are well supported by people of many different traditions in Cambridge, and were greatly appreciated. The addresses have been published by S.L.G. Press in their pamphlet series.

European Links

Brother Angelo is now an accomplished speaker of Italian and will be 'Our Man in Assisi' to many pilgrims this year. The ecumenical contacts he is able to forge throughout the year and the understanding he can offer by being resident in Assisi is well given to the cause of unity.

Brothers Bernard, Samuel and Terry Cyprian participated in a conference at Bec in early May. Joining them to discuss 'The Authority of the Bible' were students from a Roman Catholic Seminary in France, Assumption Sisters from Paris and students from Salisbury and Wells Theological College. Meanwhile, the Prior, Dom Philibert O.S.B., was recently at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, when he visited Saint Francis House and had lunch with the brothers.

Brothers Jonathan, Terrence, Rufus and Leo Paul visited the Jesus Bruderschaft in May for ten days.

Brother Simon

To our great joy, Simon has been awarded a World Council of Churches Scholarship for one year to do further theological studies at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas. He plans to go in October.

Poor Clare Conference

For the first time, The Reverend Mother and a Sister from Freeland were invited to attend the Poor Clare Abbesses Conference, which was held at Spode House in Staffordshire in April. The conference this year dealt mainly with the formation of a Federation for the Roman Catholic Poor Clare convents. But from the ecumenical point of view, it is such meetings that form the basic link which can then be strengthened by the life of prayer.

Summer Festivals

Alnmouth : As last year, there will be two open days at Alnmouth this summer, on 3 July and 10 July, with different programmes. On the 3rd we start with picnic tea, followed by Evensong and talks and a barbecue. On the 10th there is a midday Eucharist with talks and tea in the afternoon. All are welcome.

Hilfield : Their Festival on 3 July will have a slightly different form this year and details can be found elsewhere in *THE FRANCISCAN*. We will be sending out a duplicated sheet about this and the Stigmata Festival on 18 September, rather than two lots of invitations, in order to try and save you and us postage ! It would be very helpful if you would be SURE to fill in the tear off slip.

Farewell

We bid farewell to the Bishop of Sherborne, Victor Pike, this Autumn and we would like, through the pages of our magazine, to thank him for his many kindnesses to us over the years, and to assure him and Mrs. Pike of our love and prayers for a happy retirement. The Bishop hopes to make an informal farewell visit to the Hilfield Friary on 1 August.

Group Visits

In recent months Alnmouth brothers have begun experimenting with weekend visits by mixed groups of young people—from school, college or parish—with a sharing of our life, which seems much enjoyed and fruitful. It also builds up new contacts. The old T.V. room is now fitted up with four beds for occasions like these.

750th Anniversary

The Society's First Order is meeting together for a General Chapter—of all Professed Brothers and Sisters within reach in the Province—which will be held at Hilfield Friary from 6—10 September. About eighty Brothers and Sisters are expected.

Other rallies, festivals and conferences are planned through the summer and around the Feast of Saint Francis. Among these is the Franciscan Week at Corrymeela in Northern Ireland, which follows in the tradition of gatherings for the Scots and Irish (and they do welcome the English and Welsh too !) from 18—24 September. Details about this from : Miss Eva Stewart, 230 Ballysillen Road, Belfast 14, or from Brother Kevin. The holiday week theme is 'Sharing'. The Belfast Rally is on 2 October and the London Rally on 9 October. The Northern Rally on 23 October is in S. John's Church, Newcastle. The Bishop, our Tertiary, Ronald Bowlby will celebrate, Brother Michael will preach and there will be a talk in the afternoon.

Outside Speakers

John Austin Baker, a Canon of Westminster Abbey, gave a very stimulating lecture to the brothers on 'Faith and Reason' in February at Hilfield. The Reverend Gordon Wakefield, also an author and a Methodist Minister who many will remember from the Canterbury lectures in 1974, made a welcome visit to the Friary on 24 March and gave a very interesting and amusing talk. In April, Father Mark Gibbard S.S.J.E. spoke on 'Witness and Contemplation' and the brothers also welcomed Bishop James Blair to talk on 'Bangladesh'. In the same month, the Reverend John Poulton, the Archbishops' Executive Officer for Mission spoke on the subject of 'Mission Today'. Tea meetings at Cambridge have included a most interesting talk by Doctor Hunter Blair, entitled 'Cross

Currents in the Northumbrian Church', in which he spoke of the early northern Saints. This talk made a special appeal to the enthusiasts of the work of the Venerable Bede.

Order of the Bath

The large Edwardian baths at Alnmouth friary are not suitable for the installation of an ambi-lift for Brother Denis, so an order for a new bath was made and one of the bathrooms now has a new look, with bath and ambi-lift installed, the latter a sort of chair which swivels round into the bath. So Brother Denis is able to enjoy a proper bath again. He keeps in good form !

Lent Courses

Many of the brothers were involved in Lent and Holy Week preaching and they would like to take this opportunity of thanking their hosts for many kindnesses received.

Brother Reginald writes :

PACIFIC PROVINCE I write from Alangaula on the island of Ugi. Here Brothers Michael Davis, Gerard and Randolph came last November to establish our training house. Progress is being made with the buildings and the overgrown gardens have been cleared and tidied. There is a small outside ministry to the hospital at Kerepe and the newly established area secondary school at Pawa, but it must be emphasised that our main work is to establish a training centre for Solomon Islanders who want to join the First Order. The Minister General gave the brothers a retreat when he was here in January so they started the year well. On 30 March, Austen Iro (Brother Gordon Austen) was made a novice. Alangaula is the first place where I've experienced crabs crawling across the Chapel floor during prayer time : but there's good fishing !

At Honiara, Daniel and Colin have been joined by Timothy. They continue working as part of the Cathedral Parish team. All three brothers give religious instruction at King George VI Secondary School. Timothy is due to conduct a short retreat for the Melanesian Brotherhood at Tabalia on S. Mark's Day. Patteson House meanwhile has many visitors and has given accommodation to several young men who have been looking for work in the town.

The month of February I have spent in New Zealand and was with the brothers at Glen Innes for all except the last week when I visited the Third Order and Companions in Palmerston North, Wellington and Christchurch. English clergy who find it impossible to devote sufficient time to keeping their vicarage gardens will appreciate one of the problems of our small family of friars in Auckland. But

Brother George's zeal for gardening (and, incidentally, for cooking) is well known and after his arrival in January his impact on the grounds was rapid and thorough. It is obvious that the brothers have become very much part of the local community, quite apart from the parish. Increasing numbers of young people from the Secondary School opposite find their way to the house : it is a place where they can relax and be at home. Donald Andrew has started a branch of the Credit Union in Glen Innes : this has drawn many people together to help and support each other and is proving an asset in an area where family life can easily be disturbed by a lack of planning and know-how in financial matters. Rodney, Donald Andrew and George have all been involved in a parish mission at Tauranga during Lent. Geoffrey preached during Holy Week at S. Mary's, Glen Innes and then conducted a retreat for New Zealand Tertiaries in Auckland. In June, David John is leading a series of VI/VII Form Conferences at S. Paul's Collegiate School, Hamilton.

In Papua New Guinea, our brothers at Haruro have been going two-by-two on evangelistic patrols during Lent, as have Alfred and Francis Damian from Port Moresby. In January, Andrew went to Port Moresby to join the team at lik lik hap and he is now the Medical Officer at the Mental Hospital at Laloki. Pastoral work at the mental hospital, the prison and the University keep the Moresby friars fully occupied now.

Our family at Brookfield is increasing and we have several aspirants there—although we are sorry that Matthew Bruce, having completed his novitiate feels that at this stage he should not go on to Profession. We wish him happiness and God's blessing : along with himself we shall miss his practical gifts displayed particularly in building and printing.

But we also have another novice—Ronald Anthony—who was clothed at the beginning of March. The brothers have a full programme of Lent preaching this year. Alan Barnabas has settled happily at Brookfield and he and Joseph David are conducting a Holy Week Mission at Coondoowindi.

The first meeting of the Australian P.N.G. Regional Chapter of the Third Order was held at the beginning of February. Jim Warner has since been appointed Guardian of the Tertiaries in this region. The Order is growing and I shall be in Cairns, 4—6 May, to conduct a retreat for the Tertiaries in the newly formed Northern area.

‘Mister Fadernebble’

BROTHER NEVILLE S.S.F., who died just after Christmas was a most remarkable holy eccentric. I came under his influence in 1958 as a student sharing the life of that ex-brothel at 84 Cable Street, E.1., which had been transformed into S. Francis Hospice in 1944, and to which Neville Palmer devoted the final years of his active ministry. He became a legend in that legendary street, that thin, serious, ageless figure with the unbelievably patched habit and the rusty bicycle. Neville was an apostle of non-violence in a violent street. He remained a committed pacifist, one of the earliest Christian supporters of direct action against the bomb and of the Committee of One Hundred. He was probably the first member of a Religious order to march from Aldermaston, though he was an extremely shy man who hated publicity.

Neville worked in Cable Street in the very difficult post-war years when the district was building up into the dockland slum cafe zone, and he became one of the first white people to be accepted within the early communities of East and West African, Somali and West Indian seamen. Later he was to move more into the Hindu and Bengali groups, and he often used to burst into Hindustani or Urdu during the sermon at Sunday Mass, much to the bewilderment of the English and West Indian members of the congregation. Those early immigrants are now widely scattered throughout the East End, and, indeed, throughout the world. Many of the London ones are in Spitalfields and Bethnal Green, and they still talk of ‘Father Neville’ with great devotion. Recently, a social worker in the East End was told by a West African Muslim that ‘Father Neville’ was dealing with his problem—although Neville had left the area in 1963. I was amazed to find that this was his name for me, whom he had first known in those days. ‘Father Neville’ had become a generic term for all Christian ministers! Some years ago, at 3 a.m. outside a Soho club, I saw a well-known African criminal whom I hadn’t seen for some ten years, being arrested by the police. As his eyes met mine, he simply said, ‘How is Fader Nebble?’. Letters used to come to Cable Street addressed to Father Nivel, Father Navel, and, on one occasion, ‘Mister Fadernebble, Cable Street’.

Between 1958 and 1963 when I worked closely with Neville, Cable Street was the scene of much violence. Bottle fights and stabbings were common. Many people tended to over-dramatise the events, and the press often sensationalised Cable Street. Neville was a master of understatement. He referred to every episode from a small-scale stabbing to a riot as a ‘little dispute’. He often used to stop knife battles in the early hours by walking in between the assailants, scratching his stubbly chin, and saying innocently, ‘How are you these days?’—followed by that half-amused, nervous cough for which he was famous. When Neville was seriously ill in the Mile End Hospital in the early sixties he is said to have had the oddest collection of visitors that place had ever seen.

The heart of Neville was his contemplative prayer. He was up at all hours in his tiny cell which was filled with bottles of beetroot, old copies of *Peace News*, and literally hundreds of Lyons Individual Fruit Pie packets on which he wrote all his sermons. But he was always in the basement chapel at 6.15 a.m. in prayer. More than anyone else, he taught me how to pray. A disciple of Gandhi, he was

a self-effacing follower of the non-violent Cross. He was a true contemplative, a man who saw things clearly, and he saw much that most men in London never saw. But he said very little, never seemed surprised at anything, and much of what occurred in those now demolished streets has died with him. Or rather it is still part of his prolific intercession. His intercessory concern for people stretched across the world. In 1963 he went to Ceylon for two years. The day he left I was leaving for a short visit to Moscow. We knelt together in the kitchen of Dock Street Vicarage and said the Itinerarium. Two years later he returned from Ceylon, rang me up, and said, 'I just wanted a word about the A—— family in Camperdown Street'. It was typical of him. He will still be interceding for the most extraordinary collection of human beings.

BETHNAL GREEN.

KEN LEECH.

Following Saint Clare

Sermon preached at the Rally on 4 October, 1975

FROM the Gospel we have just heard 'I thank Thee, Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, for hiding these things from the learned and wise and revealing them to the simple'. It seems fitting that I should talk to you today about S. Clare; little known, perhaps, except among Franciscans, but so important to Francis and therefore to us.

Clare and Francis are, of course, inseparable and complement each other, sharing the same ideal, manifested in different ways; the one, Francis in a life of considerable publicity and activity; the other, Clare, in comparative seclusion. If you walk from Assisi down the hill to S. Damian's, just as you reach the Monastery, right opposite the gate, you come to a bronze statue of S. Clare. She is holding up the monstrance and pointing with the other hand in a gesture to halt the Saracen hordes about to invade the city. That statue embodies for me the real Clare, a strong-willed young woman whose determination beat the opposition of her illustrious and powerful relatives, and wore down the legal sanctions of popes and prelates. She knew what she wanted and went straight for her goal, and this directness of approach makes her message relevant not only to her own generation but to those succeeding it, and not least to our sophisticated and materialist age. She has, I believe, three things to say to us today. Live simply; pray simply; love simply.

First, *Live Simply*. We cannot, I suppose, talk of Clare or Francis without thinking at once of their mutual desire for poverty. Francis spoke of 'My Lady Poverty'—Clare writes of 'The true and holy poverty' which was for her a way of life. It is important that we should understand this. Let's be clear for a start that material poverty is not in itself a virtue—a thing to be sought. There is no merit in squalor, or degradation, or deprivation. In our Franciscan family the question of different standards of material poverty occurs very often and we have areas of work like New Guinea and Tanzania to remind us continually of the difficulties involved. It is right that we should have a passion for justice in this very unfair world, where two-thirds of the population live at subsistence or starvation level, while the affluent remainder pass by on the other side.

Clare as a young girl of the privileged class, was well known in Assisi as being generous and compassionate in giving alms to the needy, especially those orphaned in the Perugian wars ; and Francis' desire to share all he had led to his declaring that he wished to be poorer than any other living. But their poverty was not just a morality ; an identification ; a desire for social justice—nor indeed was it merely an ascetical discipline which assisted their personal sanctification. It was so much more.

S. Clare, in writing of her poverty, states her motive again and again. It is ' For the Lord became poor for us in this world ' ; it is ' Out of love for the most holy and beloved Child, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger ', and again ' O marvellous humility and astounding poverty ', ' In imitation of the poor and humble Christ '. Almost everything Clare wrote repeats her desire to be poor like the Son of God. This is *incarnational* poverty, living simply, in imitation of the incarnate Lord.

We are not all called to the same extent of material poverty, but we *are* called to the attitude of mind behind it, in respect of created things under God. Clare grasped this principle to the full, seeing in it a way of freedom, a removal of barriers between herself and God, herself and others. There was nothing rigid or excessive in her approach, though the standards of her time were different from ours. Whatever her own sacrifice, she was kind and gentle with her Sisters, allowing each to find her own level. If any Sister needed anything she was to have it. Clare's poverty was non-judgemental, and not an imposition, but she nevertheless invites and encourages any who will, to base their life on this premise—to share in the redemptive mystery by living like Christ. Like him in his birth at Bethlehem—setting no store by dignity of birth, race, or caste ; like him in his life at Nazareth—learning total dependence on God our Father, and maturing in the loving service of our brethren ; like him in the plains of Galilee and the streets of Jerusalem—accepting life's sorrows and pains and the evils which fallen humanity can perpetrate ; like him on Calvary—right on to the ultimate poverty of our loneliness in death. In all an incarnational poverty which accepts the insecurity and insufficiency of our human condition and does not try to escape by hiding under material gain, status symbols, and social distractions but looks to the Son of God who voluntarily left all to be as we are.

All Clare's life and spirituality emanates from this one principle ; that of imitation of our Lord's life—and so we come to the second point of her message. *Pray simply* : Clare speaks boldly to our generation on the subject of prayer. She left very little written down—just five letters, her Testament, and some prayers. And most of what she has to say is the gospel, slightly paraphrased, indirectly quoted, but unmistakably the gospel as it had become part and parcel of her own life and thinking. She was an educated young woman, the daughter of a noble house, well instructed, no doubt, in spiritual matters, but she left no books of devotion, and no detailed advice on ways of prayer. She admonishes her readers to be open to the Spirit ; to learn to have a true knowledge of themselves, so that their spiritual life may be tempered with moderation. ' I ask you in the Lord, that you may live to praise him, to make the homage you pay to him reasonable, and always to season your sacrifice with the salt of wisdom '. The way of the gospel leads to a direct and uncomplicated approach to God.

Like Francis, Clare had a great devotion to the Passion, as is shewn by the prayers

she wrote, and she stresses the need for a strong and sincere love, together with the common sense of practical judgement in respect of ourselves under God. The result is a gospel freedom from camouflaged egoism which fusses about its own spirituality, and from an immature legalism which sticks to rules contrary to the Christian spirit.

Some of us are afraid, aren't we, to let go in prayer? We learn about methods and development of ways of prayer—all very good—till we get stuck in them! Or we are just frightened of the word 'contemplation', supposing that we are not good enough, or have not learnt enough, or merely have not enough time. Clare wrote to Agnes of Bohemia, 'Contemplate the most beautiful of all the children of men, who to save you became the least of men, despised, scourged, dying on the cross; contemplate Him and have no other desire than to imitate Him'. Again many of us are afraid of our emotions in religious expression but Clare is quite extravagant and uninhibited in writing of her joy in the Lord and her overflowing thanksgiving, 'I am transported with joy and happiness in the Lord, like all those whose desire is to fulfil the will of Jesus Christ'. 'Recall the unutterable delights of your celestial King, His riches and eternal honours'. She *expects* the experience of God—a charismatic approach like Francis', almost anachronistic in their day, and she approaches him with confidence.

'Love Him with all your heart; with all your heart. He gave Himself up for you. Love, I say, this Son of God most High . . . the heavens and all creation could not contain the Creator, yet a faithful soul becomes His habitation and His throne'. Look at him and learn to be like him; that is her way of prayer. And though we have no evidence that Clare received any particular spiritual experience or visions or other form of ecstasy, her letters are full of praise and on the eve of her death she could say 'Thank you, my God, for having created me'.

And so we come to the third point—*Love simply*. Cardinal Suenens in *A New Pentecost* writes, 'To have faith, it has been said with justice, means not only to lift one's eyes to Heaven, to contemplate God, but also to look at the earth and see it with the eyes of Christ'. This is precisely Clare's gift. For her, the unforgettable thing was God's incredible gesture of love in the Incarnation. Her whole life was built on this and her burning desire to go with him all the way. Her apostolate and that of our Sisters at Freeland, and of all Poor Clares, no less than ours lived out in an active setting, is to love and serve in imitation of Christ—to recognise in every man and woman the image of Christ, however blurred, and to bring out that image. 'Clare, humble and unworthy servant of God, handmaid of the Poor Ladies, wishes you joy in the Author of salvation, and all good things that can be desired'. She knew and taught that love, whether directed God-ward or man-ward, is one gift, the Spirit of God acting; and she wished her followers to see themselves as co-workers with him by loving and serving in order to encourage others, 'In the love of Christ love one another', she says, 'and shew the love you have in you by your outward works that your examples may inspire others to grow in the love of God'.

We shew our love for God when we enter willingly as she did into the spirit of His incarnation—when we know ourselves children of a loving Father in whom we trust, upon whom we call, and with whom we share our daily troubles and pleasures; and when, knowing this and resting in the assurance of his love, we go out

from ourselves to our brothers and sisters in this world, with our hearts overflowing with his love ; when we can enfold, without seeking to possess them ; when we can cherish their humanity and share our vulnerability ; when we can put ourselves at risk to draw out the free response of their love.

Some of our generation of Christians, and perhaps noticeably we in this Franciscan family, have learnt in recent years to be less inhibited in shewing friendship and affection for one another. Let's not be afraid to love, but to be sure what real love is—for it is also true that in our generation perhaps more than in any other, love has been caricatured and travestied. Eroticism and egotism, power-politics and party-spirit are not marks of love but of selfishness and of fear. We need to re-discover the reality of love deep in man's heart—love which is an attitude as well as an emotion—a driving force from God permeating our human wills, our mental processes and our bodily powers. We have not only to strengthen our personal relationships but also to recover that power of social and communal love which shines out of the New Testament. The one springs from the other. A true relationship of love, whether in marriage or between friends engenders love for others. This is its hallmark. It has been said that to love is not to gaze at each other, but to look outward together in the same direction. Clare's friendship with Francis was like this. Circumspect as it had to be, they were closely united in a love which in their own lifetime reconciled and drew so many Brothers and Sisters together.

The more we love the more we are able to love, because maturity in love is when Christ loves through us and we simply let him. Clare wrote to her friend Agnes 'Do not ever believe that the fire of love with which I burn for you has cooled in the least'. Distance and infrequency of communication might have been supposed a barrier but no—she goes on 'Let the tongue of my flesh be silent on the subject of my love for you ; words are the language of the mind : The love that I feel for you is beyond bodily language'. She simply held up those she loved to the Lord, surrounding them with love in her heart.

It is commonly supposed that it is impossible to maintain many relationships in depth, but I would venture to qualify this belief and say that it depends on one's consideration of dimension. If the depth of a relationship is to be measured in terms of our continuing emotional involvement and the time and energy we are able to extend on the practical problems of another's life, then we are necessarily limited. But although these things may well be required of us in our loving they are not always within our power and we must not equate love with a social worker's case-load. For love is the gift of God himself, immeasurable, charismatic, universal, insatiable and its depth has no fathoming, no limits—it is total and real in every direction.

How good it would be if in our day the same might be said of us as was said of the early Church, 'See how these Christians love one another'. We might then turn the world upside down.

I am going to end with the blessing which S. Clare left for her Poor Ladies and which no doubt she extends to all who follow her in spirit, 'I bless you while I live, and after my death, as much as I can and more than I can, with all the blessing with which the Father of Mercies has blessed his sons and his daughters according to the Spirit, and with which he will bless them in Heaven and on earth. Amen'.

ELIZABETH C.S.F.

‘ Keeping The Faith ’ in Today’s World



I HAVE been asked to write a short article about how one may maintain or ‘ keep ’ the Christian faith in the world today, with so many pressures upon us and with so much that would appear to be antagonistic to any sort of deep Christian allegiance. I wish to consider this very important question under three or four headings, hoping that other contributors to the discussion may provide their own insights. As a theologian, my own contribution must, of necessity, be of a rather specialized sort. I do not apologize for this, since I am convinced that a religious faith which is not based upon a firm theological position is likely to be ephemeral and even subject to serious damage once it is exposed to attack from those who regard Christian faith, and indeed any faith, as absurd or impossible.

In the first place, then, I believe that we must be quite certain concerning what we mean when we use the word ‘ God ’. After all, and despite the so-called ‘ death of God ’ people, Christianity is a God-centred or theocentric faith. That is why our understanding of the meaning of the word ‘ God ’ is so important.

It is my unhappy conclusion, after years of theological reading, study, and teaching, that a great many people have an entirely false ‘ model ’ or picture of God. In this tradition which we inherit, the way in which God has been understood has all too often been in terms of views which are utterly sub-christian. There is the picture of God as the tyrannical dictator, who demands from his creatures a cringing submission in which they are supposed to deny their human integrity. There has also been the notion of God as a remote ‘ first cause ’, who initiated the creation and then left it alone save for those infrequent occasions when he miraculously intrudes to correct errors, to restore order, or to save his creatures from the results of their wrongness. Or—this maybe is worst of all—there is the idea that God is what my philosophical master A. N. Whitehead called ‘ a ruthless moralist ’, who for some reason has established laws which bear little if any relation to the nature (and the possibilities) of his children ; this ‘ God ’—and I must put the word in inverted commas, since it points towards what I think to be a false idol—punishes or rewards us in an arbitrary fashion and hence has very slight compassion for the human beings who are his children. These appalling pictures of God are then

supposedly combined with the Christian view, drawn from the total event of Jesus Christ, that ‘God is Love’: but there is only an adjectival use of *that* idea and the basic assumption is moral dictatorship or, if we employ the other ‘models’ I have mentioned, tyrannical control or remote causation.

I think that we *cannot* maintain the basic Christian faith unless we begin with, and continue to focus attention on, the profound affirmation given in what Whitehead called ‘the Galilean vision’—namely, that God is ‘pure, unbounded Love’. Anything else we may say about him must be judged as to adequacy by the degree to which it is congruous with *that* affirmation. Thus, we can say that omnipotence is a way of speaking of God’s being the Love, or Lover, that is the only strong reality, whatever appearances may suggest; omnipresence is a way of telling us that this Love or Lover is everywhere available and always active; omniscience affirms that Love is all-wise and all-knowing; eternity means that such Love is ‘from all time and to all time’; transcendence affirms that such Love is unexhausted by whatever goes on in the world; immanence declares that this Love is operative in the whole created order . . . and so on.

Once we have the right, and to my mind only possible Christian, picture of God, we can go on to see that we can only keep the faith in these troubled days if we recognize that it is an organic whole. Some people seem to think that the articles of Christian belief are a string of assertions, one after the other, which may be separated and understood each by itself. This is absurd. The fact is that anything Christians should believe is part of a great scheme or system, whose centre is God revealed and active in Christ for human ‘wholeness’ or salvation. It all hangs together. So we accept, or reject, the Christian world-view not as if we had to do with a series of particular credenda but as an integrated unity. Obviously there are assertions which are more or less central; there are also some which are so peripheral that they have slight relationship with the central core: here the virginal conception, the empty tomb, etc., will serve as examples. But the *big* things remain, with God active in Christ as central to give us the key assertion that God is indeed Love and always, everywhere, in every way, *is*, because he *acts as*, that sheer Love which abides forever at the heart of reality.

I am frequently oppressed by the nonsensical way in which our more conservative brethren assume that a substitutionary doctrine of atone-

ment, to give but one example, is an indispensable element in Christian faith. On the contrary, I should say, the heart of the matter is 'new life in Christ'; and any doctrines about *how* this is given must be secondary to the basic reality of such life found in companionship with our Lord and made real for us as we let him dwell in us as we dwell in him.

Thirdly, we need to see that participation in, and maintenance of, Christian faith in this as in every day is a function of our being incorporated into the fellowship of those who accept Christ and are caught up into his continuing companionship. In other words, our sharing in the life of the Christian community will be a way in which we can 'keep', once we have come into, the faith in Christ. One is suspicious of 'individualistic' religion; one is enormously grateful for the witness of the saints and for the privilege of sharing in their fellowship. So I would say to a troubled believer, 'Stick with the Church, participate in its sacraments, try to live its life. Then you may come, perhaps over a long period, to see how richly rewarding and enriching it can be for you, as it has been for countless other men and women down through the ages'.

This brings me to the inescapable importance of the Eucharist for our maintaining our faith. To be present at, to share in, to feel truly caught up into, the ongoing eucharistic action—here is the heart and centre of Christian life; here, too, is the mode by which we may most effectively come to deepen our faith, no matter what others may say or think. And with this I wish to associate a personal sort of devotion. By this I do *not* mean the following of any prescribed sort of practice. After all, people differ. What I *do* mean is that each of us, in his or her own way, must centre attention on the Love which in Christ is enacted in human existence and in that centring find a kind of inner security which all 'the changes and chances' of life cannot seriously disturb. One of our needs today is help for many people in finding a way in which this can be done, not by the following of some conventional pattern but by an appropriate manner of relating daily life and its concerns to the cosmic Lover who is God. Confessors, counsellors, and directors can be of much assistance here, if only they will not assume that there is but one way (usually that way which *they* have found helpful) of thus relating each human life to the divine reality. Monica Furlong, especially in her *Christian Uncertainties*, has written superbly about this.

Finally, we all of us need to see that human life is a matter of ‘becoming’, not a business of static being. The meaning of human existence is in our becoming what I like to call ‘lovers-in-the-making’; we are on the way towards that goal or we are diminished and damaged creatures. The direction our lives is taking, in view of the goal toward which we are moving, is what supremely matters. Therefore ‘sins’, in the sense of this or that particular bit of wrongness, are nothing like so important as the movement towards realizing our loverhood-in-God. Thus we can come to see that what is significant is the degree to which our hearts and wills, our desires and our yearnings, are set on the fulfilment of love. Self-examination then is no matter of a ‘spiritual flea-hunt’, as von Hügel devastatingly called it, but a consideration of whether or not the sheer Love, in its ecstasy and anguish, seen on Calvary, is the master-light of our seeing, the criterion of our self-appraisal, and the determination for our activity.

To be a Christian today is not easy, to be sure. But nothing worthwhile is ever easy; it always requires the whole of us, with our earnest willing and our zealous desiring. If Christian faith is centred in the cosmic Love brought near in Jesus, even though it is also always and everywhere actively operative, the ‘set’ of our hearts is the important matter. And to my mind, that ‘set’ is *the* way of maintaining even today the Christian faith.

Thus far we have been considering *how* one can maintain one’s faith in the present day. But there is another question, with which other writers in this issue will doubtless specially concern themselves: not how can you and I ‘keep the faith’ but is the faith worth keeping? That is, can it stand up to critical examination and meet the attacks so often made against it today? I shall not try to put the case for Christian faith, in this sense, because to do so would go far beyond my assignment and would also be much too large an issue to discuss in a brief paper. But I wish to make a few observations which to me appear important.

There are obstacles or stumbling-blocks to acceptance of the viability, in our time, of the Christian position. I mention three of them, although the three by no means exhaust the list that might be compiled.

First is the notion that the Christian faith is tied up with what seem incredible legends—‘miracles’, some call them—which so contradict what we think we know about the way things go that nobody in his senses could accept them. But suppose that the ‘unnatural wonders’

(as they have been styled) are more in the telling of the story of Christ than in the actual events which occurred. Suppose that for people like writers of the gospels there was no other way in which they could state, in their own idiom and for their own audience, the *real* wonder, Christ himself. Suppose that the patterns of thought and the explanatory idiom were simply natural to them at that period of history. Does not the very fact that such tales were told show something of the importance seen in the One about whom they were told ? The religious meaning, even the basic biblical meaning (so much more profound than the literal words and idiom), is not something outlandish and unscientific, but something that was, and still is, creative of faith in God acting in love (since he *is* Love) through the total event of Jesus Christ.

Again, many people find an enormous obstacle in the sad fact that some preachers, some theologians, so insist on minimizing the genuine humanity of Jesus, as well as so refusing to find any genuine relationship between that Jesus and the rest of human experience with its persistent intimations of 'the Transcendent', that which (or him who) is more than human, that they make this Jesus seem an intrusion into the world from 'outside'. But what can we make, nowadays, of an 'intrusive' concept of God ? Absolutely nothing, I believe. But let us not forget that the central affirmation of the faith is that Jesus was most certainly a Man, in whom God acted signally and decisively, *not* that Jesus was God without that qualification. He was 'bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh', our Brother, quite as much as he was our Lord, the One in whom the Divine Activity (which, as I have so insistently urged, is God-in-action-as-Love) was specifically and almost visibly present. Furthermore, as the ancient Church Fathers in the Patristic Age always affirmed, the Divine Activity in and through Jesus does not deny, but completes and corrects, supplements and fulfils, whatever of goodness, righteousness, love, truth, may be found elsewhere in human experience. As in a reading-glass which may be so held as to capture the sun's rays, he concentrates and focuses, he intensifies and supremely expresses, the rays of God's action in the whole creation.

Thirdly, some think that to be a Christian demands the rejection, arrogantly and superciliously, of whatever is sound or true in other religious traditions, other schemes for living, other great spiritual leaders of our race. This, I gather, is to be discussed by Doctor Martin

Israel in his paper. I wish only to urge that even if some in Christian history and some, alas, even today, have talked in this 'imperialistic' fashion, the central Catholic tradition has always seen Jesus Christ and faith in him as both 'the desire of all nations' and the crowning of whatever is sound and true elsewhere. 'God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past . . . has spoken unto us in a Son'. So writes the author of the so-called 'Epistle to the Hebrews'. What the Buddhist, the Hindu, the Muslim, the Confucianist—even the Communist and the contemporary secularist and humanist—have been seeking; what in some degree, however small, they may have found: this, and much else, can be read by the Christian as pointing to that Son.

Yet in the long run the *real* obstacle is human pride, arrogance, rejection of the best good—in other words, 'sin'. The only response to that sin is God's graciousness, manifest in Christ. To have faith in *that* is a risk, to be sure. But it is worthwhile. So say the Christian ages.

KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

NORMAN PITTENGER.

Christianity and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism



THAT we now live, even in Western Europe, in a religiously pluralistic society is a truism. Not only are many immigrant communities introducing their indigenous cultures into their new lands of residence, but there has also been a progressive estrangement of the people of those lands from their ancestral religion, Christianity. This tendency is seen not only in the great decline in church-going of late, but also, much more significantly, in the appeal of Eastern Religion to many dissatisfied young people. These, especially of the more affluent classes, were educated in what might be called conventional Christianity, but have now lost patience with what they consider the banalities of church worship, and seek instead after the springs of living religious experience, such as are found in the great mystical tradition of all the world's higher religions. While Christianity is

certainly not without a very significant mystical core, it must be admitted that there are few churches that give evidence of any knowledge of eternal reality. Only the contemplative communities bear the impress of a real living spirituality, and these are apparently inaccessible to many seekers after truth.

The hall-mark of mystical religion is its stress on immediate experience, the experience of the all-abiding reality of God Who is no longer incarcerated in personal imagery, but is both the ground of being and the transcendent reality Who embraces and interpenetrates the world of phenomena while remaining apart from all material limitation. The religious tradition that is most vitally infused with this all-embracing transpersonal God is Hinduism, especially in the form or philosophy known as Vedanta, and typified by that supreme mystic Sankara. In the Buddhist tradition God as such is not countenanced, but the ultimate reality of the Buddha Nature is not very far removed from the transpersonal Godhead glimpsed both in Vedanta and by such an outstanding Christian mystic as Meister Eckhart. To be sure, a personal God is also worshipped in certain strains of Hinduism, so vast and tolerant is the Eastern conception of reality. The classical expression of God is 'Not that—not that'. God is indeed the negation of negations, as Plotinus said ; whatever we say about God is wrong, as Eckhart declared. And yet God is spoken of in the personal pronoun He, so close and loving is He to those who give themselves in love to His service by attending to Him and to their fellow creatures. Another tradition that attracts quite a number of young Westerners is the Sufi mysticism of Islam, which derives its insight both from orthodox Moslem sources and Neoplatonism, together with not a little Hindu influence.

What is the attraction of these forms of Oriental mystical religion that is so obviously lacking in the current presentation of the Christian message, which seems to be a compound of obsessional social concern and unimaginative Bible reading interspersed with the Mass, which few seem to understand properly ? I would use one phrase, the Freedom of the Spirit. It allows unimpeded exploration into the very roots of meaning and destiny, and is uncluttered with restrictive views of life and death.

Whether man has really come of age, as Bonhoeffer claimed in that rather misquoted passage of his, is a matter of debate, but one thing is certain : modern man is no longer prepared to be imprisoned in a

straitjacket of theological restraint ; he will no longer listen to what the authorities believe is good for him to know, and intends to make his own exploration and researches. Oriental religion, with its undogmatic approach to the final reality that we call God, is much more hospitable to the seeker, especially as it has developed techniques of spiritual growth and has made basic contributions to the science of meditation and contemplation, without which, in my opinion, a proper prayer life is impossible. Furthermore, the East knows much more about psychic unfoldment than does the Western tradition, which on the whole is so terrified by the very word 'psychic', following an ancient biblical injunction, that it has left the entire paranormal realm in the hands of unscrupulous occultists who do considerable harm, as much through blind ignorance as through deliberate malice. We have to face the fact that a fully developed person can no longer be satisfied by the bread of dogma alone. His soul and spirit have also to be recognised, fed, and educated. It is clear to me that if religion has any future in our world, it will have to explore the psychical and mystical realm, so that man may attain something of the divine nature deeply implanted in his soul. Indeed, if we do not partake of this divine nature fairly soon, and start to transform the world into a place of spiritual light, both we and the world will be destroyed by the savage power of our own unenlightened intellects.

And yet, when all is said and done, how very inadequate Oriental religion is in the end—at least when it is practised by Westerners. They seem to lose contact more and more with the soil and with their fellow men, and retreat progressively into exotic realms of speculation about the nature of reality, the destiny of the soul, and various psychic phenomena. All too often a new gnosticism emerges, no more acceptable than the ancient one in which matter was considered inherently evil, and the object of existence was to escape from its contaminating embrace and move directly into 'spiritual' life away from the flux of material things. I do not believe that this was, or is, the intention of the great saints of these traditions, in whom a great compassion burns to enlighten blind humanity. But there is an over-all coldness, masked by an impersonal detachment to the world's sorrows and tragedies, in so much Eastern religion. Harmlessness is the keynote rather than love, which is assuredly a difficult, not to say dangerous, quality, and one better left for the true servant of humanity. It is not surprising that a blighting poverty rules in the areas where these forms

of thought flourish ; it is through the influence of the Christian West that steps are at last being taken to combat disease, squalor, and penury, but alas, the task is beyond comprehension.

Personally I have no fear whatsoever for the future of the Christian religion. Its strength lies in its affirmation of the holiness of matter, made certain once for all in the Incarnation of the man Jesus in whom the Godhead dwelt bodily, and in the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, who has never remained still, but leads us today as in the past into all truth, such as we are capable of receiving. The principle of evolving religion is established through the mediation of the Spirit of God in all our works, and no matter what mistakes we make, He will show us the truth, and we shall emerge freer than before as a result of our encounter. Ultimate reality, as glimpsed by the mystic, is totally desirable, but for it to be something more than a mere vision and to be brought to the realms of possibility, it has to be fertilised with hard work. This work is nothing less than the embodiment of the whole person in the grime and dirt of the world, so that his own transfiguration may entail the transfiguration of the world also. In the person of Christ this arduous regeneration of all that is corruptible to uncorruptibility is shown as a presage of the time when all mankind will have become likewise regenerated.

What I am saying, and quite dogmatically too, is that the way of attainment of the mystical vision glimpsed and expounded by the mystical tradition of the East is by the joyous immersion of the whole personality into the coarseness and suffering of material things, so that by losing one's life in self-giving love for that creation, both it and the person may move beyond death to the realm of eternity. Mystical bliss is never private ; it is either corporate or else non-existent. The ideal of the Bodhisattva, the fully enlightened One who returns from Nirvana to Samsara to help the stragglers on the way, is surely the true insight into reality, but what remains an insight in Buddhism becomes a reality in Christianity—at least the Christianity of the fully realised man. But this is not the Christianity of the masses, who see salvation in a mere belief in Jesus, without a supreme commitment to His name and nature. And in order to know that cosmic Name fully, we have to become cosmic persons also. Until our religion infuses us with that supreme knowledge that comes from full spiritual awareness, we will merely talk Christianity but never live it. And let it be said that the real Christian is one who lives every moment in love of all that is, and

especially his immediate environment and the people around him. This is the life of Christ. Formal worship should put us in that frame of mind in which to pursue the Christ-like life better ; it should be a fount of everliving experience of God made real in the Ministry of the Word whose author should be the Holy Spirit Himself, and in the transfiguring sacrifice of the Eucharist. As the priest, during the Prayer of Consecration and the Words of Institution, performs the act of spiritualising the bread and wine so that they become the very body and blood of the Universal Christ, in whose Body all true believers are of one substance, so the true believer should transform and spiritualise all the works of the world, and especially his relationships with other people, during his life outside his church while in the world, where there is little awareness of spiritual reality.

The way of Christ is the way of this transformation of matter, so that 'the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God' (Romans 8 : 21). But before this wonderful vision can be fulfilled, we must all be born anew, and not only once but every day, through the power of the Holy Spirit. This new, perpetual birth into the reality of God can only be effected by prayer. This is where the insights of Oriental religion are so helpful, and where we can all learn much about the proper way to contemplation. But the great defect of Eastern systems is their tendency to put the whole onus of advancement on the practitioner. We know that progress is a gift of God. His grace alone sustains us, but we have to be receptive to that grace.

I believe that the type of person who can come to the living Christ through the person and the teaching of the Buddha has really made a full approach to reality. The Buddha diagnosed the essential malady of humanity well enough, and his prescription is fine as far as it goes. But, as I have already said, even if one does attain a great degree of spiritual emancipation, and understands all mysteries, it avails one nothing until such time as one has brought that understanding down to the lowliest of one's fellows. And this teaching cannot be merely intellectual, for no one can retain it fully on the mental level. The teaching must be brought down to earth, so that it is fully tractable to the least of our kind. This is the way of Christ.

They did not know Him when He was with them ; they could not understand Him fully, although the common people received Him gladly because of what He was and what He showed. It was only

when He bore the full burden of the world's darkness on His unoffending shoulders and descended into the darkest hell, when His redeeming grace had illuminated the vilest parts of human nature, that the forgiveness of God's nature could be finally understood by even the poorest in wisdom. Our religion is one of mysticism made material, so that the material, transient universe may be consummated in that glory in which death is overcome in victory. But for this to become real there must be a full understanding of the mystical reality seen in the unitive knowledge of God. Until we show this in our lives and teach it to those who venture in the Christian way, our witness will indeed be merely that of sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Never at any period has the collective wisdom of all the world's great religions been so desperately required to stem the descent of the whole world into the barbarism of materialistic nihilism. I can only pray that we will all have the humility to learn from each other, so that ignorant triumphalism may yield to humble love in action. Assuredly we all need the contemplative insights of the mystical East, whereas they will never grow into the fullness of eternity until they take upon themselves the yoke that is of Christ.

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

MARTIN ISRAEL.

Scripture Versus Tradition : An Unreal Conflict



WILLIAM CHILLINGWORTH, an Anglican divine of the first half of the seventeenth century, once wrote 'the Bible only is the religion of Protestants'. He was writing at a time when a fierce controversy was raging between Catholics and Protestants on the subject of Scripture and Tradition. The Catholics maintained that Scripture needed to be interpreted and supplemented by means of tradition. The Protestants on the whole agreed with Chillingworth's principle.

What neither side realised at the time was that the Bible itself as we have it is already deeply modified by tradition. In the first place, we can see in the Bible itself tradition at work : the Books of Chronicles represent the tradition of the post-exilic period interpreting Israel's earlier history books, I and II Samuel and I and II Kings. A

distinguished modern Jewish scholar has suggested that the Book of Deuteronomy represents a revision and representation of the earlier elements in Israel's written law books in the light of conditions in the sixth century B.C. ; essentially an example of tradition revising Scripture. In addition to this, the Scripture which the writers of the New Testament used was a body of documents already considerably modified and altered by tradition. Between the writing of the latest book in the Old Testament and the time of our Lord, Jewish scholars had been at work on the text of Scripture, explaining difficulties, smoothing out inconsistencies, adapting its meaning to the circumstances of the day. The two main channels of interpretation were *Midrash* and *Targum*. *Midrash* meant any commentary on Scripture, whether to apply it to daily living, or merely to elucidate its meaning. *Targum* was the Aramaic paraphrase of the Hebrew Scripture lessons read in the Synagogue service. Thus for example, Abraham was always presented as having been instructed in the law of Moses, even though he lived long before the Sinai events. Similarly in Numbers 12, where Moses is represented as having married an Ethiopian woman, the interpreters had to explain this away, since in their day it would have been shocking for a devout Jew to marry a Gentile woman ; one *Targum* substitutes for the word ' Cushite ' (Ethiopian) in Numbers 12 : 1 the word ' fair ' ; Moses married a blonde, that was all. Another *Targum* explains that Moses had been compelled to marry a Gentile woman when he was in Egypt, but divorced her as soon as he was free to do so. Thus by a process of harmonising, explaining, even altering the obvious meaning, Jewish interpreters had already modified and adapted the books of the O.T. to suit a religion which was centred round observance of the law of Moses as written in the Pentateuch. This, and not some pure, uninterpreted Bible, was what the writers of the N.T. knew as Scripture.

Of course the N.T. writers as they approached Scripture had their own presuppositions. Whereas the Rabbis had had a Law-centred understanding of Scripture, the earliest Christians had a Christ-centred interpretation. They wanted to find prophecies of Jesus Christ and information about Jesus Christ in Scripture. They were not interested in using the law of Moses as a guide to daily life, since they had, they believed, the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Consequently they gave more attention to parts of Scripture which had been less important in Jewish eyes. Christians were primarily interested in the prophetic

books and the Psalms, and much less interested in the legal codes. They did however prize the narrative parts of the Pentateuch, including of course the first eleven chapters of Genesis in which the creation and fall are described.

At the same time we must realise that the writers of the N.T. accepted without question many of the presuppositions about Scripture which they inherited from their Jewish forefathers : they believed that Scripture was inspired and inerrant (II Timothy 3 : 16) ; that David wrote all the Psalms (Romans 4 : 6) ; that characters in the patriarchal history approved by God were models of piety (see I Peter 3 : 6, where Sarah, by no means an attractive character if you take the narrative in Genesis as it stands, is described as a ' holy woman ', an example to Christian wives). Above all they accepted as part and parcel of Scripture legendary additions and embroideries which had accrued in the course of the centuries. Out of several possible examples of this, we will take three : in I Corinthians 10 : 4 Paul, describing the experience of Israel in the wilderness sojourn, writes : ' For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ '. The narrative of the bringing of the water from the rock in Scripture says nothing about the rock following the Israelites ; but we know that there was a rabbinic legend that God provided them with a moveable rock, so that whenever they required water it would be available. Paul takes for granted that this addition to Scripture is true. The second example is found in Galatians 4 : 29 : ' But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now '. Paul is referring to Genesis 21 : 9 where Sarah sees Ishmael playing with Isaac. The Rabbis interpreted ' playing with ' as something much more violent : ' mocking ' or ' persecuting ' or even ' attempting to kill ' (they wished to provide a respectable reason for Abraham's action in expelling the child). Paul accepts this without question. Thirdly, in I John 3 : 12 Cain is described as being ' of the evil one '. This probably refers to a legend that Cain was actually the result of a sexual union between the serpent and Eve. Thus the N.T. writers themselves were very far from receiving or using a Bible untouched and unmodified by tradition.

2.

In the ensuing centuries two important developments took place as far as the Christian Church was concerned. First, the New Testament writings were accepted as Scripture by Christians, were incorporated

into the Bible, and became the standard by which what now was called the Old Testament was evaluated. This did not formally mean any depreciation of the Old Testament, which was still treated as inspired, inerrant, and completely consistent with the New Testament. It meant that a great deal of explanation of the Old Testament had to be done. But Origen, the greatest of the Fathers of the Church before Augustine, found an all too successful technique for this, the method of allegory. By allegory resolutely applied anything in the Old Testament could be given a meaning satisfactorily in accord with the teaching of the New Testament. This method was treasured and used right up to the time of the Reformation.

The second important development was the growth of articulated Christian doctrine. This was necessary as the basic Christian message had to be defended against other forms of teaching, and there was no lack of them in the ancient world. But as this doctrine came to be articulated it was approved and registered by Councils, incorporated in creeds and formulas, and soon itself became a standard to which Scripture had to be conformed. At least by 451 an official doctrine of the person of Christ ('how was he both God and man?'), and an official doctrine of God as Three in One had been accepted by the great majority of Christians throughout the Roman Empire. But this doctrinal formulation, necessary though it no doubt was, became in effect a very powerful form of tradition modifying (and in some cases altering) Scripture. Thus for most of the Church Fathers Jesus' omniscience throughout the period of the incarnation had to be defended. A text such as Mark 13 : 32, where Jesus says that he does not know the time of his return, had to be explained away ('He pretended not to know' said Cyril of Jerusalem in about 350). Again, the doctrine of the Trinity had to be read into the text of Scripture, on the assumption that it must be there explicitly, not just implicitly. Indeed the Church Fathers with astonishing nerve found it most notably in the Old Testament : a text such as Psalm 33 : 6 : 'By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth' is often cited as a proof for the doctrine of the Trinity. Of course the Fathers accepted the harmonising and hagiographical presuppositions of the N.T. writers in interpreting Scripture : the Gospels have two conflicting accounts of when our Lord cleansed the Temple, so the Fathers concluded that he must have cleansed it twice. The Blessed Virgin cannot have lost her virginity after the birth of Jesus,

so references to Jesus' brothers and sisters must indicate his cousins, and so on.

3.

This process continued right through the mediaeval period. The Protestant notion that the Bible was neglected during the Middle Ages is nonsense : the Schoolmen expended a vast amount of activity and scholarship on the Bible. Some of them even went to the Jews and made use of traditional rabbinic exegesis for the Old Testament. But it was all based on the official interpretation : you had to show that your interpretation agreed with that of the Fathers. No one challenged the existing tradition.

Then came the Reformation. This seemed to take the form of a 'back to the Bible' movement. Certainly the great Reformers, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Cranmer all believed that they could successfully appeal to the text of the Bible against many of the beliefs and practices of the Church of their day. They constantly cited the Bible as their sole authority and agreed to abandon their tenets if it could be shown that such tenets were inconsistent with Holy Writ. But in the light of subsequent history it may be questioned how far they actually succeeded in doing this, or indeed really wished to do this. They certainly did not want to dismantle the structure of doctrine which had been built upon the New Testament. When Servetus in 1553 came to Geneva and rashly challenged Calvin to a debate in which he intended to argue against the doctrine of the Trinity and the full divinity of Christ, Calvin acquiesced in his arrest and execution. And the Anglican fathers, we know, always professed a reverence for the decisions of the ecumenical Councils of the first seven centuries. It might therefore be more accurate to say that the great Reformers did not want to dispense altogether with tradition : they wanted to return to the tradition of the first five centuries.

There were some who boldly accepted the thesis 'the Bible alone'. They would believe nothing that was not explicitly set down in Scripture. But they very soon found themselves repudiating all the basic affirmations of traditional Christianity : the full divinity of Christ cannot be said to be unambiguously expressed in Scripture, so away with it. Certainly the doctrine of the Trinity as formulated in the fifth century and later is not expressly set down in Scripture, so that must go too. These biblical radicals were represented by the two Sozzinis from Italy and that same Servetus whom we encountered above from

Navarre. Their teaching came to be known as Socinianism. It is what we would call Unitarianism today. But even the radicals did not jettison every element of tradition : they still maintained that Scripture was inspired and inerrant. They still maintained the necessity of harmonising Scripture so as to interpret it as being completely self consistent.

The real 'back to the Bible' movement began in Germany in the eighteenth century with the rise of the critical approach to the Scriptures. This does not of course mean that the scholars of the day deliberately set out to 'criticise' the Scriptures in the popular sense of the term, that is disparage them. It meant that they began to use on the Scriptures the same methods of analysis and interpretation that had proved successful and rewarding with other ancient documents, the works of Homer for example. But it meant in effect that the basic assumptions about Scripture which up to that time all Christians had shared with all Jews were now dispensed with, i.e. the inerrancy and internal consistency of Scripture. Scripture was treated like any other ancient document, and very soon it proved to be very far from internally consistent, to have been composed at periods and by persons very different from those which had been traditionally accepted, and above all to be by no means at every point in harmony with traditional doctrine. Thus the picture of an omniscient divine figure clothed in humanity, which is what traditional orthodoxy had deduced, mostly from the evidence of the Fourth Gospel, was seen to be not consistent with the picture of Christ presented in the other Gospels. The prophecies about Christ which traditional theologians had drawn from the Old Testament were found to be by no means demonstratively prophetic, and in some cases (as in the mistranslation 'virgin' in Isaiah 7 : 14) to be demonstrably misinterpretations. As critical work on the New Testament has proceeded, the various disparate elements in the Scriptures have been more and more dissociated from each other : Paul's doctrine of Christ, for example, is by no means identical with that found in the Fourth Gospel. John's doctrine of the Church seems to be based on different assumptions to that of Paul. The author of the Pastoral Epistles seems to hold a 'mediator' Christology which is hardly compatible with what we find in either Paul or John. In fact, just as Socinianism produced the disintegration of traditional doctrine, so criticism of the Bible seems to have produced the disintegration of the Bible itself.

Till recently the critics thought that their criticism was based on objective quasi-scientific principles ; and they often contrasted their objective, impartial approach to the Bible with the tendentious, dogmatic approach of traditional theologians. Today however intelligent students of the Bible realise that this claim cannot be fully justified. Everyone approaches the Bible with some presuppositions. The biblical critics of the nineteenth century were bemused by the pseudo-scientific Positivism of the period ; and their successors in this century, in Germany at least, have more than once betrayed an unconscious leaning towards Lutheran fideism which has undoubtedly influenced some of their conclusions. But this does not mean that we can neglect their work. The fact that everyone begins from some presuppositions does not justify us in never beginning at all.

4.

The conclusion might seem to be total confusion. I believe that this is not so, though those who know anything about the present state of N.T. scholarship might well be excused for believing that it was. I will content myself with making three points :

1. The Scripture—tradition *conflict* is unreal. You cannot have one without the other : you cannot have Scripture without interpretation. It is not self interpreting, as some of the Reformers seemed to imagine. But interpretation *is* tradition. On the other hand the *distinction* between Scripture and tradition is valuable and should be maintained.

2. There are two mistaken reactions to the problem of Scripture and tradition as it presents itself to us today :

- (a) The Catholic reaction : this consists in saying : ‘ So we were right after all. We always said you can’t have Scripture without tradition. Now even Protestants admit it. Concede then that the (Roman) Catholic Church has been right all along. Accept our interpretation of what Christianity is. Don’t ask awkward questions about what really happened ; or if you do, accept our answers without argument ’. This is roughly speaking the apologia presented by Roman Catholics in the period between the two Vatican Councils (1870—1963). J. H. Newman’s greatness consisted in the fact that he was one of the first to realise that you could not prove contemporary orthodox doctrine from Scripture. He said in effect : ‘ Cease trying to do so. Claim only that contemporary doctrine

(as held in the R.C. Church) is the legitimate development of Scripture'. There are two insuperable objections to this solution. First, why accept the version of Christianity held in the R.C. Church? Why not the Greek Orthodox version (by no means identical)? Why not the Protestant versions? The only possible answer is: 'we know ours is right', and this is a *petitio principii*. You cannot find common ground with those who don't accept your version so as to be able to prove it to them. The other objection is the practical one that when this theory is put to the test by applying it to specific questions it usually proves wrong. Pope Pius X in 1910 (rashly believing his own theory), appointed a Biblical Commission to solve major questions of biblical exegesis which were troubling Catholic scholars. It gave very specific answers to the problems put to it (e.g. : is there a Second Isaiah?), and the answers almost invariably proved to be wrong, and are now admitted to have been wrong by all Catholic biblical scholars.

(b) A Protestant reaction : this consists in saying : 'What does Scripture matter? Christianity is what we choose to make it in any age or clime'. This way madness lies. If there are no standards of belief, then my guess is as good as yours, and versions of Christianity usually relegated to the lunatic fringe, such as Mormonism or the Watch Tower creed, have as good a right to be regarded as normal as any other. We should take warning from what happened to Buddhism approximately five hundred years after Gautama Sakyamuni the Buddha : a version of Buddhism (Mahayana) arose and largely prevailed which entirely ignored its historical roots. What began as a very unmetaphysical *yoga* has turned into an all-embracing philosophical system. I at least do not want to see a similar evolution taking place in Christianity.

3. I believe that there is a constant throughout the period which we have been considering. It is what is called 'salvation history' : Christianity is the account of God's saving action towards men in history ; beginning in myth and legend, culminating in the supreme revelation of God's nature and character in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, resulting in the establishment of the Church in history. This, I believe, can be shown to be the common theme of the New Testament ; this is what the Fathers thought they were defending. This can make sense of the Old Testament without distorting its original meaning. This, I believe, can be discerned

and defended without outraging the canons of biblical criticism. The expression of this message in terms intelligible to each generation is the task which the Church as a whole has constantly to tackle. Today for the first time for four hundred and fifty years Christians in the West have an opportunity of grappling with this task together without being distracted and frustrated by the centuries-long division between Catholic and Protestant.

UNIVERSITY OF HULL.

ANTHONY HANSON.

God, Man and Creation



Man as Part of Creation

THE Second World War was largely responsible for the vast increase in scientific activity of the last three decades. The experiences of the traumatic years 1939—45 encouraged the belief that the salvation of man lay through greater understanding of the natural laws and modes of operation of the universe, and through the technical exploitation of that understanding. Many examples could be quoted of individual scientific advances which contributed to this general view of salvation through scientific knowledge. One of the first of such advances was the discovery that short-wave ten-centimetre electromagnetic radiation could be produced by a cavity magnetron—a device known for more than twenty years but which had hitherto remained no more than an interesting curiosity—and used for the radar detection of hostile naval vessels, a use that was crucial for the battles in the mid-Atlantic. But of equal, if not greater significance was the realisation of the role in the war played by women employees ; it was this realisation which at the end of the war stimulated research into the properties of steroid hormones with the aim of developing a contraceptive pill. At about the same time, the possibility of the manufacture of the hydrogen bomb, using thermonuclear fusion processes similar to those which a few years previously had been shown to generate the energy radiated by the sun and stars, made governments realise that scientific knowledge was indivisible ; knowledge gained in a non-practical sphere could later turn out to have immense importance in social and political concerns.

This fundamental realisation of the close relationship between academic investigations and their subsequent practical applications has lain behind the growth in governmental funding of natural science within this generation, and, although never fully articulated, has nevertheless penetrated deeply into the public consciousness. Salvation it seems comes through knowledge of creation—and the priests of creation who mediate that salvation to mankind are the scientists.

But, for Theology, of equal importance to the Second World War and its immediate consequences has been man's increased understanding of his place in creation. Ever since Darwin, the continuity rather than the discontinuity of man with creation has been emphasised by natural science. The same fundamental laws which operate on inanimate matter in the universe operate too within the physical human body. And too, the fundamental quantum particles which existed in the primordial chaos some twenty thousand million years ago now exist, transformed by a series of cosmic events within our human bodies. Man is the natural product of the outworkings of these cosmic processes, and a proper Theology of Man must of necessity go hand in hand with a proper Theology of Nature. Nature indeed is 'man-bearing' in that the creation and evolution of man is one of the possibilities constantly latent within the universe.

But if man is a part of nature, depending on it and owing his origins to it, then also his part within it seems very small. The revolution in thought begun by Copernicus, which removed the earth from the centre of the universe, has continued into our century with our awareness that the earth is a small planet of a small star situated near the edge of an insignificant galaxy in a universe of many millions of galaxies at vast distances from each other. Does it not then seem unreasonable to claim, as Christians do, that every individual human being, each one a minute speck in a truly dreadful and awesome universe, is yet of supreme importance within the sight of a loving and caring God? Dependent on understanding it, brought into being through it, infinitesimal within it, how is man to find his place within this universe? But before attempting to grapple with this question, let us first summarise how our astronomers of 1976 see the universe.

The Astronomers' Universe

According to the most generally believed picture, the material of the universe as we know it today was once compressed into a very small

volume of high density, some twenty thousand million years ago. We can only speculate as to the state of the universe before that time. The primordial universe consisted of fundamental particles governed not by deterministic laws, but by the statistical laws of quantum probability. Individual fluctuations within the primordial fireball later gave rise to the formation of galaxies, and within these galaxies individual stars and star systems condensed. The universe has since been expanding from its original small volume, and the galaxies have been receding from each other. Galaxies themselves are not static, but are believed to go through evolutionary sequences, whilst changing their shape, size, and brightness. Within the galaxies, individual stars also go through evolutionary sequences, some of the stars finally degenerating into dead systems, others, the more massive ones, exploding in gigantic bursts of cosmic fireworks ; the remnants of these explosions may then condense into new stars, and the evolutionary processes repeat themselves. During the processes of evolution and explosion additional chemical elements are formed, and these elements, under appropriate conditions which may prevail on planets, may subsequently link up to form the complex molecules necessary for life as we know it on earth.

Now within this general picture certain principles stand out. First, there is the characteristic of a dynamic changing evolving universe constantly bringing into being new forms of particles and conglomerates of particles ; this dynamism is characteristic of an expanding universe and extends too to the individual systems within the universe. Second, there is the mechanism of this evolution—a mechanism of destruction followed by re-creation. Third, there is a close relationship between the properties of the whole universe and the properties of fundamental nuclear particles. Attempts to define mathematically the conditions in the primordial universe move constantly between the laws of quantum micro-physics applicable to particles and the laws of macro-physics applicable to total systems. Nor is it possible to distinguish whether the total universe is defined by the sum of its individual parts, or whether the behaviour of individual systems is determined by the universe as a whole. It is not even possible to say whether fundamental laws determine the behaviour of systems, or whether the systems themselves create the fundamental laws. Fourth, as in all quantum physics, the observer must always be regarded as part of the system which he is observing ; instead of a sharp distinction between subject and object

there is a trinity of subject, object, and interaction between subject and object. Once inside this three-fold system the observer cannot make precisely determined statements about the object of his observations.

Creation and Redemption

Much of traditional Western Theology has taken as its starting point the need for the redemption of man, and the action of God in the Incarnate Christ in bringing about that redemption. There has been a marked tendency to emphasise Redemption rather than Creation, and until very recently this has been particularly true of German Protestant Theology. But the deliverance of Western Europe from Nazism, unlike the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, has not so far encouraged belief in a Redeeming God ; neither has the awareness of the type of deep human sinfulness experienced at Auschwitz encouraged the view that redemption lies through turning to a loving, forgiving, and reconciling God. Rather, as we have seen, these experiences have encouraged an interest in Creation, the possibilities and power hidden within creation, and in the psychological and communal nature and behaviour of man. And unlike the first Jewish hearers of the Gospel, modern man is not reared in a climate of messianic expectation ; for him ' the day spoken of by the prophets ' has no immediate appeal because ' the prophets ' are not a part of his personal or social history. But if the concept of redemptive history does not appeal to a modern sceptic, then perhaps the concept of redemptive evolutionary creation might. In this way of thinking, the Word was made flesh as the fulfilment in human and personal terms of what is hidden within creation, and as the consummation and final and supreme expression of the nature of the cosmos.

Theological Models

The use of cosmology to construct models of the Divine Nature is, of course, a commonplace in the Greek Fathers. Origen and Maximus the Confessor immediately come to mind as men who in the early Christian centuries attempted to relate their Christian theism with the cosmology of their times, and this tradition has long been maintained by Eastern theology. In this tradition therefore, let us speculate how we might use our contemporary twentieth century cosmology in this way.

First, let the dynamic expanding universe evolving from its primordial state twenty thousand million years ago provide us with the model of the ongoing developing understanding of Christian truth, begun at the Incarnation and continued in the growing faith of the Church. Here, the Incarnation and the Church may be seen as the supreme expression of the natural and universal processes of creation and expansion. The cosmological mechanism of these processes, destruction and re-creation, may direct our minds towards the possibility of Crucifixion and Resurrection—the consummation of the evolutionary process. The close interaction between the laws of micro-physics and the laws of macro-physics suggests to us the individual and the community, the believer and the whole Church, in which the latter sums up the former, and the former manifests and particularises the latter. And the three-fold system of subject, object, and their interaction may suggest to us a model of the Divine Trinity, as well as draw our attention to the theme in traditional spirituality of the union of the believer with the Divine Nature. Even the concept of the universe as ‘man-bearing’ may be used to direct our attention towards Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as ‘God-bearing’, and provide us with a model for the Divine activity at the Annunciation—that universe which may potentially, though not necessarily, give birth to man is paralleled by Mary who may, but does not have to, give birth to the new man in the infant Jesus.

Creation and Liturgy

The importance of a Theology of Creation is two-fold. It enhances the dignity of man by indicating his participation within and responsibility for his cosmic environment. And it emphasises the glory of God by showing how the whole universe comes within the realm of the Kingdom, and how the cosmic processes themselves may be lifted up into the redeeming action of God in Christ. Such a theology is undoubtedly part of the tradition of the Early Church, as typified for example by the writers of Ephesians and Colossians and, in the second century, by Irenaeus. Significantly, the Eastern Church, with its strongly developed sense of the cosmic, has emphasised the Eucharist as ‘anaphora’ or ‘lifting up’. The close relationship between Cosmology and the Liturgy of the Eucharist is one which Christians in a scientific age would do well to ponder. For the Eucharist is always the Sacrament of Creation as well as of Redemption; it is the Sacrament in which the believing community enacts out in ritual form and presents before the Heavenly Altar both its own nature and also

the natural rhythms and processes of the created universe—that universe in which man has been born and from which he in part takes his nature. Wherever in the Church there is a retreat from a proper Cosmology there is also a retreat from a proper understanding of the Sacramental offering, and the way is wide open for a new and dangerous Gnosticism, separating man from creation and from God. The twentieth century Church must ever be grateful to our contemporary Cosmology for reminding Her once again of the twin Doctrines of Creation and Incarnation, and for the realisation of those Doctrines within the Eucharistic Liturgy.

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

DAVID PEAT.

Christological Developments in Response to Current Challenges

1

Are Christian Theologians Losing Their Nerve ?



THREE years ago Bishop F. R. Barry published an article in *The Times* entitled 'Don and Churchwarden—never the Twain ?' He was commenting on the sad fact, as he saw it, that 'the English layman distrusts theologians and tends to regard them as militant trouble-makers, intent to deprive the faithful of their securities. Indeed', the Bishop continued, 'he suspects that the cleverer the theologian, the less he is likely to believe'. This distrustful attitude of many devout churchpeople towards current trends in theology seems in no degree to have been dispelled since 1973. Only the evening before I started to write this article, a serious and intelligent church-going friend with whom I was talking observed in the most matter-of-fact manner : 'To be honest, I find it very difficult to think of theologians as Christians'. How much truth is there in this feeling among believers today that theologians are 'losing their nerve' in the face of contemporary challenges to the Christian faith ?

In considering so large a question as this in a necessarily restricted compass, it will probably be practical to concentrate upon one area of

Christian belief in particular : the area of convictions and claims about the Person (and Work) of Jesus Christ. Here, more directly than in any other department of its official doctrine, we encounter the *distinctive* content of the Christian proclamation—the Gospel message which sets Christianity apart from other monotheistic religions and from which, historically, the rest of its characteristic theology has been derived. It is here, therefore, that we find current challenges to Christian belief most sharply focused. Even more clearly, perhaps, than in the lifetime of S. Paul, it is affirmations about ‘Christ crucified’ which nowadays present the major stumbling-block to outsiders, sympathetic as well as hostile. Why should this be so ?

2

Current Challenges to Traditional Christology

1. In the ‘global village’ of today’s world, growing contact and communication between adherents of its different religious traditions means that every claim to decisiveness or finality on the part of any *one* such faith must be regarded as, in principle, open to question. Where Christianity is concerned, this basic difficulty is exacerbated by the undeniably paradoxical nature of its central assertion : that God became man in Jesus Christ for the salvation of the human race. Christianity is alone among the world’s religions in acknowledging the possibility of an ontological union* between Divine and human levels of being, while at the same time limiting this union absolutely to one unrepeatable occurrence in the person of a particular historical figure.

2. Then, again, the credal and conciliar documents which for traditional Christianity define the nature of this once-for-all Divine Incarnation are formulated in the philosophical language of a past culture. They were drawn up by theologians who categorised personal existence in terms of *essence* rather than of activity or consciousness, and who therefore felt no difficulty in attributing to Jesus a ‘human nature’ unattached to an individual human self. In orthodox Patristic thinking, the only conscious subject of the Incarnation was the Logos, the pre-existent Word (or Son) of God. Knowing nothing of today’s discoveries in the fields of biochemistry and psychology, the Fathers of Nicaea and Chalcedon were not equipped to formulate a Christology calculated to satisfy a twentieth-century understanding of what constitutes authentic human personhood. In the deliberately polemical

* i.e. a union of essential nature.

words of J. A. T. Robinson : ' However guardedly it may be stated, the traditional view (of the Incarnation) leaves the impression that God took a space-trip and arrived on this planet in the form of a man. Jesus was not really one of us ; but . . . he contrived to be born so as to appear one of us. Really he came from outside '.

Robinson is by no means the only contemporary Christian theologian who is sensitive to the outsider's charge that many devout believers, even today, interpret the Incarnation in terms that are both mythological and ' docetic '.* To mention only two of many possible examples, Professors Maurice Wiles and Anthony Hanson both recognise in recent writings that the New Testament accounts of Jesus *begin* from the assumption that he was a real human being. Hence the traditional Patristic presentation of the Incarnation is not only (to use Hanson's word) ' incredible ' *per se* in the light of contemporary biological and psychological knowledge ; it is also untrue to the original source-documents of the Christian faith.

3. Here, however, another set of difficulties arises. Three problems in particular may be noted.

(a) The most careful New Testament scholarship of the last century has established beyond reasonable doubt that the Gospels as we now read them are, at least in some sense, an expression of the primitive Church's understanding of the *theological* significance of Jesus, in his life, death and resurrection. This means that we have no certain and unmediated access to the actual words (still less to the thoughts) of Jesus himself. How, therefore, can we evaluate the theological accuracy or adequacy of the variously emphasised interpretations of Jesus which the Scriptural writers advance ?

(b) Supposing, nonetheless, that we resolve to accept (and to harmonise) these interpretations, as being ' closer to the facts ' than any others now available to us : can we be sure that we understand precisely what the N.T. writers intended their language about Jesus to convey ? Here, we are faced with the problem of Biblical ' hermeneutics '. To take a simple example by way of illustration : Professor John Hick has recently argued that the designation ' Son of God ', as applied to Jesus by the earliest Jewish Christians, had a merely moral and metaphorical connotation. In the view of Dom Christopher Butler, however, the significance of this title was from the first fully ontological in intention.

* Docetism = the heresy of denying the full humanity of Jesus.

How many believers today are in a position to decide between two such differing verdicts ?

(c) This raises the further related question : Is anything actually achieved when alleged historical or intellectual difficulties, such as those which have just been considered, are dismissed by Christians on the basis of appeals to the 'divinely inspired' nature of Scripture, as guaranteeing the truth of its affirmations about Jesus ? If we cannot be certain that we have correctly interpreted the (inspired) minds of the N.T. writers, how can we specify the precise content and significance of their (authoritative) teaching ? To cite here the promise attributed by John to Jesus that 'the Spirit . . . will guide you into all the truth' is merely to argue in a circle, by presupposing that this pledge (being Scriptural) is itself not only inspired and therefore authoritative, but also unambiguously clear in its meaning and application !

4. Most of the foregoing problems have a bearing, not only upon traditional claims about the Person of Christ, but also upon the intrinsically inter-related claims about his saving Work. Lack of space prevents us from giving this side of our subject the consideration it demands ; but we can at least draw attention to the fact that for many years now Christianity has been strongly challenged to justify (a) the intelligibility, (b) the morality and (c) the contemporary relevance of its teaching about the atoning efficacy of the life and (especially) the death of Jesus. A brief but arresting presentation of some of the questions involved may be found in the essay by J. S. Bezzant included in the Cambridge symposium *Objections to Christian Belief* (Constable 1963 ; Pelican Books 1965).

3

The Response of Contemporary Theologians

Not every theologian is likely to regard *all* these current challenges as having equal weight. Yet taken cumulatively they add up to a formidable list of issues, some of which, at least, merit close examination by the responsible Christian thinker of today. Some, of course, may be tempted to sidestep this whole complex Christological area by concentrating upon other aspects of contemporary theological concern—in particular, perhaps, by emphasising the current rediscovery of the Holy Spirit as the unifying basis of all distinctively Christian experience. But a living faith never benefits in the long run from refusing to face its challengers ; and during the last few decades

theologians from many different backgrounds and denominations have been reconsidering the Church's traditional claims about Jesus, in the light of issues such as those which we have been surveying. A great deal of honest heart-searching has gone into this work : more, perhaps, than is always recognised by those who have not been required to undertake it. It is, however, arguable that the ordinary churchman may be forgiven for finding himself somewhat baffled by the variety of responses which these professional theologians have made to their challengers. The cynically-minded might even feel inclined to agree with the conclusion of one such theologian, Don Cupitt of Cambridge, that there are as many preached Christs as there are Christian preachers ! It may be helpful, all the same, if we try to clarify the situation a little by attempting to group together some of these differing responses in accordance with the respective angles of approach which they reflect.

1. There are, in the first place, those theologians who are satisfied that traditional Christological claims can and must stand. This fact should perhaps be stressed rather strongly, in view of the widespread impression that all theologians today are infected by radical and reductionist tendencies !

(a) Some of these theologians defend the Christological *status quo* as a matter of theological principle. (i) According to the Conservative Evangelical scholar J. I. Packer, for example, the Christology of Nicaea and Chalcedon derives from the witness of the N.T. writers, which must be regarded as divinely inspired and therefore authoritative. While it fails to come to grips with the hermeneutical issue discussed earlier, this view effectively disposes of 'historical uncertainties' by subordinating them to the doctrine of scriptural sufficiency and inerrancy. By the same means, it renders intellectual problems devoid of their threat to 'true faith'. And it finds the particularity and exclusiveness of Christian claims for Jesus a cause not of scandal but, on the contrary, of glorying. The only challenge to faith in Christ presented by other world religions is the challenge to missionary evangelism. (ii) For the Anglo-Catholic theologian E. L. Mascall, the Christology of Nicaea and Chalcedon must also be acknowledged as permanently binding ; but in this case it is the principle of *ecclesiastical* authority and indefectibility which is invoked. Dogmatic declarations by the undivided Church of the Fathers are to be regarded as inspired by the Holy Spirit at work in the Mystical Body of Christ, and accordingly as intrinsically irreformable. Since it holds that the New Testament itself is also a

product of the Spirit-indwelt Church,* this approach, like Packer's, substantially reduces the significance of historical uncertainties. It exhibits slightly more sensitivity to intellectual problems ; but regards these as, in the main, the result of modern misunderstandings of the Fathers' original intentions. Here the hermeneutical issue seems to be acknowledged, without its implications being fully grasped. For a contemporary Catholic approach to the challenge presented by other religions to traditional claims for Jesus, we may refer to the thesis of Father Karl Rahner that God in Christ operates 'anonymously' to save men wherever they are truly seeking Him—so that the sincere devotee of Krishna or the follower of Buddha is, in fact, saved by the Incarnate Lord of Christianity.

(b) There are some theologians, however, whose defence of traditional Christological affirmations does not rest upon any kind of prior commitment to a doctrine of authority. J. A. Baker, for example, argues on empirical grounds that a combination of 'natural theology' with the verifiable facts of Christian history and experience enables traditional Christology to hold its own against the reductionist criticisms of modern scholarship. While he allows the need to qualify some earlier assertions about (for instance) the omniscience of the earthly Jesus and his explicit consciousness of personal divinity, Baker does not believe that such accommodation to the requirements of modern psychological knowledge in any way undermines the Church's central convictions about the objective and abiding significance of the Incarnation.

2. A number of theologians, on the other hand, feel that there is a more fundamental level at which current challenges to traditional Christology must be taken into account. Among them are those writers whose published work tends to cause bewilderment and distress to many believers today. Yet their approaches, and conclusions, are by no means uniform.

(a) In the English-speaking world, some of the most influential of these 'radical' theologians approach the Christological question from a background of Biblical scholarship. (i) Writers such as J. A. T. Robinson and Geoffrey Lampe believe that the impersonal Hellenistic categories of immutable 'essence' or 'substance' used by the Fathers

* Is there another circular argument here, in using scripturally-derived doctrine of the Spirit as indwelling the Church to guarantee the authority of the N.T. as a product of the inspired Church ?

of the Early Church to explain the Divinity of Christ should be replaced by the personal concepts of dynamic activity, agency and inspiration which the Biblical writers (both in the Old and New Testaments) employ when referring to God's ways of disclosing Himself to and through men. This approach, they claim, circumvents the logical and psychological difficulties attending the 'two-natures' Christology of Chalcedon, by substituting for it a view of Jesus which sees him as revealing supremely but not exclusively, the character and purposes of God-in-action, in as far as these can be expressed on the purely human plane and in authentically human terms. Such a view allows, moreover, for the possibility of divine revelation and saving activity outside Christianity. It might, however, be argued that it does not fully come to grips with the historical uncertainties inherent in the very N.T. records upon which its own positive Christological affirmations are based. (ii) This historical problem is accorded a more prominent place in the writings of Biblical scholars such as John Knox and D. E. Nineham. Here the inaccessibility to us of the original 'Jesus of history' is accepted, together with the ambiguity and mythological character of much N.T. language about his theological significance. At the same time, however, these writers assert that the ongoing spiritual effectiveness of faith in Christ within the corporate life of the Church renders the specifically historical question about Jesus less central in importance than has often been assumed. As Nineham expresses the matter : ' Jesus lived ; and he was a being of such a kind that the N.T. faith and Kerygma are the appropriate reaction to him—the appropriateness being guaranteed by our own Christian experience in the Church. Do we need more than that ? '.

(b) This stress on present experience of the 'preached' Christ provides an important point of contact with the approach taken by a number of English-speaking theologians whose Christological concern reflects their professional preoccupation with the philosophy of religion rather than with Biblical scholarship. By writers such as Norman Pittenger and John Hick, Jesus is seen as mediating to particular persons or cultures a profound and creative insight into the nature and activity of God, which does not, however, preclude the possibility that differing (though not ultimately conflicting) insights into the Divine may be mediated through the religions and philosophies of other persons and cultures. This interpretation of Jesus as having in a Christian culture the value or significance of 'God for us' has been taken by some

writers to its extreme limit ; as, for example, in the claims of Paul van Buren, Alastair Kee and the American ' Death of God ' theologians that Jesus must now be seen as having, for his followers, *taken the place of God*. In this view (which also appears in some current theologies of ' liberation ' or ' revolution ') Jesus exemplifies in human terms all the values and powers which in earlier theistic ' mythology ' used to be ascribed to a supernatural Divine source. It is from *his* human life and teaching, not from an intrinsically unknowable (and probably non-existent) God, that the saving spirit of love, liberty and unity now spreads among the human race.

(c) This view that commitment to Jesus can co-exist with agnosticism about God is, however, capable of being reversed. Maurice Wiles, for example, has recently suggested that our first-hand human experience as created beings in receipt of ' grace ' makes possible an ' inside understanding ' of traditional claims about God the Father and God the Holy Spirit which is not supplied by any corresponding human experience in relation to claims about the Incarnate Son. He therefore argues that ' the doctrine of the unique incarnation of God in Jesus Christ . . . is not required for the whole pattern of belief (in a creative, purposive, caring God) to be true '. The significance of Jesus is, rather, that through him the abiding purposes of God and the ever-present possibility of the experience of grace have, historically, been grasped and made effective in the world.

4

Conclusions

Where so many professional experts in the field seem to be approaching the crucial issue of Christology from such different stand-points, and with such mutually-conflicting presuppositions, it is understandable that the non-theologian should feel unsettled, confused, and even despairing of any positive outcome of the present debate. In this situation, it may be reassuring to recall that the practical significance of Jesus as the focus of faith for the first Christians was not impaired by the fact that it took the early Church Fathers over two hundred years to reach a common mind on the question of his precise relationship with God, and a further two centuries to define the distinctness-in-unity of his divine and human natures ! Yet before we conclude from this that the labours of theologians, now as then, are in the last analysis irrelevant to the faith of the ordinary Christian, let us not forget that

the believer who opposes 'radical' Christology today is doing so in staunch defence of Patristic thinkers who were the recognised 'modern theologians' of their own age. Since men are rational beings, theology must always continue as an essential aspect of the many-faceted life of every religious tradition, seeking to ensure that the faith of its adherents remains honest, meaningful and preachable in a world which is constantly forcing us to re-think and develop our understanding of life in all its manifold dimensions. And this theological endeavour can never be confined to the 'formative' period (so-called) of any particular religious tradition; for faith itself does not remain static over the centuries, but evolves and assumes fresh forms with the ceaseless growth of human knowledge and experience. Even in so crucial an area as that of Christology, then, we should recognise the need for Christian theology to be pursued as an open-ended enterprise—an enterprise which is fundamental to the healthy life of faith, and yet is committed to the rejection of any allegedly 'final results' or 'assured conclusions' before that day in which we shall know even as also we are known.

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER.

SUSAN J. SMALLEY.

Ewell Monastery

The Prior of Ewell Monastery, has told us that they are now in a position to welcome guests to the Monastery and indeed with the additional accommodation that is shortly becoming available would be glad to see them. It should, however, be pointed out that it will be convenient for them to have *at least* one month's notice as with their limited numbers the entertainment of guests has inevitably to be carefully related to their on-going life. They will be pleased to hear from you.

You might also like to know that there is now available a first-class colour film strip of the Monastery and its work together with a cassette recording of a commentary which I can very strongly recommend both for the high standards and real beauty of pictures as well as the extremely and instructive commentary which has an interest of a general kind where the Monastic life is concerned far beyond the immediate interest of Ewell. It would be interesting for schools, youth-clubs, etc.

The price is:

Film-strip and cassette tape £3.50 including postage;

Slides and cassette tape £6.00 including postage;

and is available either direct from the Prior, Ewell Monastery, West Malling, Kent, or from the Friary, Hilfield.

Books

New Viewpoint ?

The Remaking of Christian Doctrine. By Maurice Wiles.
S.C.M., 1974, 146 pp., £2.50. (The Hulsean Lectures for 1973).

'All belief in God is problematic. For in our beliefs about God we are reaching out to speak of a realm beyond our ordinary experiencing'.

'What ought one to believe about God and his relation to the world in the areas of central importance to the Christian faith ?'.

These two quotations, from different parts of his book, summarise Professor Wiles' understanding of the purpose of Christian doctrine : to catch water in a sieve (as it were)—to make statements about what we cannot ordinarily experience ; to set out what it is necessary to believe about God and Christ, if we are to believe at all. He comments that it is not sufficient to accept the Christian tradition as true, just because it has developed in the particular way it has. It was developed by men as their understanding of their experience of the world. We need to ask whether they had good reasons for understanding it as they did. For Professor Wiles, doctrine is not, and can never be, a matter of once-for-all-time statements of revealed truth ; it is to be restated in each generation, indeed in each social and cultural *milieu*, according to the understandings of that time and situation. He mentions with approval Don Cupitt's comment that it is no accident that Catholics have visions of Mary, and Buddhists visions of the Buddha.

From this starting-point, he considers the doctrines of God ; of the person of Christ and his work (i.e. the resurrection and the atonement) ; the work of the Holy Spirit with the doctrine of Grace ; and, in an appendix (because it did not

form part of the original series of lectures) the Resurrection of the Body. He holds that in the development of intellectual disciplines, of whatever kind, the most important changes occur when someone succeeds in seeing the subject 'from a new perspective' (sic) ; and it is in the hope of finding a new viewpoint from which to visualise Christian doctrine that he takes as his dual axioms the principles of 'coherence' and 'economy'. While it may be permissible to say more, he comments, it is important to distinguish between mere speculation and deduction, and what the evidence *requires* us to say. This is his *economy* : the absolute minimum statement required by belief ; and by *coherence* he understands the necessity that the different doctrinal affirmations we may make shall not contradict each other, but form a consistent whole.

Thus, far, there is nothing with which one would want to quarrel openly, though it has to be recognised that his assertion about new perspectives being the most creative is no more than assertion. There is nothing wrong, either, with a demand for consistency ; though when one recognises the difficulty of making any doctrinal statement at all (as my introductory quotation appears to do), one must also realise that it may be impossible in the nature of things to achieve absolute consistency in terms of strict logic. God is not bound by the laws of algebra or formal logic ! As for minimal statements, it might be argued that a human without hand or foot is still recognisably human and able to function as such ; but at what point of progressive amputation would he cease

to be recognisable ?

On the basis of these axioms Professor Wiles concludes that while it is proper to speak of God as Creator, in the sense of the world as a whole depending in some sense for its existence upon God, yet there is no call to understand any special divine activity in any particular event. So far as an event does arouse in us a sense of the divine purpose, it may properly be understood as directing our attention to God's purpose in the world as a whole, but not as his specific activity in any place or time. After this, it is not really surprising to find that his understanding of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit implies (it is not stated sufficiently definitely to be more than an implication) that the Holy Spirit and the Grace of God are to be understood as reminders to us of our need for a religious perspective from which to view the human scene. Certainly he sees no need to commit himself any more firmly than that.

Turning to the doctrines of Christ, his Person, the Resurrection, and the Atonement, we are told that we cannot assume as an axiom that 'God and Man is one Christ'. While not dismissing this belief as impossible or absurd, Professor Wiles feels that it is extremely difficult to show that the doctrine of God-made-Man is required, either by the New Testament evidence or by the experiences of later Christians. And with that, he goes on to consider the question of the Atonement, Man's reconciliation with God through Christ. The Church has always affirmed that this is so, from early times, but has never committed itself to any one theory of how reconciliation has been achieved. Here, the juridical and sacrificial theories are dismissed as the ponderings of by-gone social and cultural *milieux*, inappropriate and lacking cogency in the present time. We are told that a once-

and-for-all-time conception of the restoration of man's relationship with God is only appropriate if human sin and guilt are themselves conceived as having a once-and-for-all beginning—with the Fall of Adam. Since, he says, no-one believes any longer in the latter, he sees no necessity for the former. Though he does admit he might be wrong. But he maintains that, as Hosea could grasp the idea of God's involvement in human suffering through his own experiences alone, so we are able to appreciate God's involvement in the suffering of his creation without any need to understand Christ's suffering as in any way special.

More definitely, we are told that we have no necessity to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, even though we may well feel that it is right to believe in Eternal Life. But if God does raise the dead, which Professor Wiles concedes is a reasonable faith, why not Christ too ? This is one of the several points at which Professor Wiles appears to contradict his own previous assertion. For while he says that though God is bodiless and inconceivable, yet this is no barrier to belief in him, at least for Christians ; writing of the Resurrection, he says that our assessment of the evidence for the resurrection will not contradict what we believe to be conceivably possible. In other words, if we find the notion of the Resurrection unbelievable, we are unlikely to accept any evidence for it which may be produced. Nevertheless, he concludes, 'The Christian hope of life after death may not, despite all the obvious difficulties, be an unreasonable belief, if it is closely integrated with belief in God'.

How are we to assess this work ? It does not seem to me so totally destructive as some previous reviewers have implied, though disintegration is its inevitable

end. Professor Wiles does make an earnest attempt to rethink some central Christian doctrines in the light of twentieth century beliefs in the fields of science and philosophy. But it is all so provisional, so tentative, so hedged about with disclaimers and the insistence that it is not unreasonable or absurd to believe the opposite of what he is commending, that to entitle the work 'remaking' seems to me to promise far too much. For what we have here is not something remade or renewed. We are not given so much as the raw materials from which to begin our own remaking. What it seems to me we have here instead, is the mechanism without the

vital spark to set it in motion ; or the sieve out of which all the water has now dripped. This doctrine is one which has been so much amputated and economised that its Christian nature is no longer recognisable to me : indeed, I believe a Muslim or Jew or any other monotheist believer would not find much to quarrel with here. If I may quote Professor Wiles own words once more : 'Hedge and qualify that understanding . . . and the faith will die, if not of the thousand qualifications themselves, then of the *boredom* (my italics) of its own attenuated claims'. And that is precisely what I believe has happened in his book.

CHRISTIAN S.S.F.

Experience in Religion

Of Many Mouths and Eyes. By Robin Minney. Sheldon, £3.75.

Mysticism in the World's Religions. By Geoffrey Parrinder. Sheldon, £4.95.

Asian Religions. By Geoffrey Parrinder. Sheldon, 95p.

Robin Minney's book emphasises experience in religion, and gives accounts of it in many different contexts. He takes note of the appraisal of such experience from the point of view of such a sociologist as Durkheim, and from the point of view of such a psychologist as Freud, but marks the limitations of both these points of view. Otto, with the idea of the sense of the numinous, gives a securer angle of approach.

It is often in a leader or specialist that the experience is known most vividly. Ritual and ceremonial developes in followers so that the context of the original experiences can be recovered. This can lead to something vivid and real for groups and individuals, but the danger of lapsing into formalism is obvious.

It is not enough to study official accounts of religions. It is necessary to discover what it means in the actual life and practice of ordinary people. This

is not easy to do, as ordinary people may not be particularly articulate, or even fully understand just why they do things. Yet unless we meet them where they are, we cannot help them to move forward. Faith is fundamental to religion, but it cannot always be judged by formulae. It needs to be assessed in terms of experience and practice.

Robin Minney (a Tertiary of S.S.F.) is an expert in Religious Education. This is not in the forefront of his treatment, but he is clearly seeking fundamental principles which must guide the giving of instruction in schools in a multi-faith situation. In an appendix he shows how his inquiry can have practical bearing on such instruction.

Though Robin deliberately does not make his study in the context of the several faiths, he refers and quotes from a number of them. Geoffrey Parrinder deliberately does explore Mysticism in the context of several faiths. His earlier chapters are rather hard going as a

clear theme takes time to emerge. He does link up his studies round the mystical experience of the monist, who seeks absorption in the divine, and the monotheist who seeks union without losing identity. The problem of exactly what mysticism is pervades the whole book. The later chapters make a useful contribution to answering it.

It is hard to escape the conclusion that clarity could be helped if we could recognise that much so-called mystical phenomena really belongs to the realm of the psychic, which must or may be

passed through on the way to true communion with God, but which can also be aroused by other means, some deliberate. True mystical experience comes from divine initiative, it cannot be induced; though man can prepare the conditions which make it more possible and likely.

Asian Religions is a reprint of a book published in 1957. So much has happened since then that it is rather 'dated', but still useful as a 'primer' in the subject.

W. Q. LASH.

Friendship in God

On Spiritual Friendship. *By Aelred of Rievaulx.*
Cistercian Publications, 140 pp., \$7-95 (U.S.A.).

The themes shared by the early Franciscans and Cistercians often appeal to us today, but perhaps the theme of this book is particularly timely. The simplicity and the return to the Gospel in both Orders led to a love and freedom in the relationships within them which is Aelred's subject here. In a world with apparently intractable problems, a world in which the traditional supports of the extended family and the stable community have diminished, and in which the family faces increasing strains, there are many attempts to discover or create small groups which can enable the individuals in them to face life with confidence (as our Third Order has done). The attempt in Czechoslovakia to create 'socialism with a human face' may have been doomed, but the search for some form of life on a human scale within our modern mass society is not likely to disappear unless the planners evolve some 'post-human' being. If Vance Packard's description, in *A Nation of Strangers*, of the factors which militate against friendship in a mobile society holds some truth, then anything which can contribute to the

deliberate creation of opportunities for friendship to flourish should be welcomed.

God is love, God made man in his own image. Christ said, 'I have called you friends', 'Love one another as I have loved you'. So it is striking but should not be shocking when Aelred says, 'God is friendship'. He believed that love and friendship should be universal but that in a fallen world, while 'love ought to be extended even to the hostile and perverse', 'no union of will and ideas (i.e. no friendship) can exist between the good and wicked'. This entails discrimination, and as the introduction says, Aelred 'knew that there were many imperfect or even totally corrupt relationships which went under the guise of friendship'. His confidence that friendship was part of a truly human life was such, however, that he trusted his monks, allowing open demonstrations of affection, because God 'has left no type of beings alone, but out of many has drawn them together by means of a certain society'. This 'society' was not an easy option if you accepted Aelred's terms: it was

purposeful, designed to give both joy and assistance as the friends made their way through life. Indeed one of the participants in this dialogue says it is too 'sublime and perfect' for him; he wants something more relaxed and chatty. Aelred will accept this only for the young and for those who may be led on from it to his 'holier friendship'.

We may identify ourselves with whichever participant we please, but perhaps, like them, most of us can learn from Aelred something about the friendship which can exist and even something which may help us to develop such a friendship to help us on our way.

A SISTER C.S.Cl.

Introducing Karl Rahner

A Rahner Reader. *Edited by Gerald A. McCool.*

Darton, Longman and Todd, 381 pp., £2.50

It seems to be becoming normal practice to bring out anthologies of the writings of theologians, these vary greatly in value and quality but in the case of this reader I cannot speak highly enough. It would almost be an understatement to call Rahner's writings prolific, the excellent bibliography at the end speaks for itself, and it would have been almost an impossible task to do justice to him in less than a thousand pages . . . however, Gerald McCool in my opinion has managed the impossible. A leading authority on the thought of Rahner, he has presented us with as complete an introduction and selection as one could ever ask of such a volume.

McCool's introduction is as clear and thorough as the whole of the book, presenting us with a picture of both the life of the man and a history of the development of his thought including both severe criticism and great respect. The scope of the anthology is very comprehensive and covers his investigations into the many problems and paradoxes of the Christian faith in fields ranging from 'Theology and Anthropology' through to 'Ethics' and 'Spirituality'. A reader wishing to research deeper in to the selections presented has available a most useful set

of notes, footnotes and indices to guide him through the Rahner 'forest'.

Rahner's writings are never easy or comfortable reading, he is at times individual and complex requiring both great concentration and patience on behalf of his readers; yet one's time is never wasted as he never fails to provoke reconsiderations of accepted ways of thinking about his fields making the way clear for a much deeper understanding and commitment. In this Reader the first few chapters and the chapter on 'Church and Sacraments' present Rahner at his best, and the chapter on 'Spirituality' is a great source of inspiration to read.

Some have said that Rahner stands at the head of most of the fields in the new orthodoxy in the Roman Catholic Church today, and this selection from his writings make this very clear (as does the recently published 'Encyclopedia of Theology' edited by Rahner and published by Burns and Oates at £10.00). Comprehensive, clear, systematic and invaluable is my opinion of this book, and at only £2.50 I see it as a necessary volume in the library of any Catholic thinker today.

KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON.

R. A. CHAPMAN.



Brother Wilfrid with his new guide dog, Tara.